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WELCOME

When it comes to desirable audio gear, the sky's the limit. The world's finest equipment makers build products that don't just elevate your favourite songs, but are also technological marvels and, often, works of art. In this magazine, we're celebrating the best of the best. The truly deluxe sound experience.

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CONTENTS



SPEAKERS

Fill your room with impeccable sound from the most precise, lively, real-sounding speakers



AMPLIFIERS

Great audio requires the finest preparation – these amps make your music sound its absolute best



TURNTABLES

As the world rediscovers the joys of vinyl, rediscover your own favourite records afresh with these players



PLAYERS

Get the most from your CDs, high-res files and streaming music services with these audiophile-level players



H E A D P H O N E S

Tune out the world for a while with the beautiful, crystal-clear sound from these amazing headphones



PORTABLE

You don't have to be at home to enjoy high-res audio. Get the hi-fi experience on the move, too



A C C E S S O R I E S

Don't forget the vital extras that elevate an impressive system to a truly deluxe hi-fi experience

OCTOBER 2017 |

T3 SOUND

SPEAKERS

Fill your room with impeccable sound from the most precise, lively, real-sounding speakers money can buy











→ The latest version of these classic speakers uses an electrostatic diaphragm to make noise, instead of the usual cone drivers. This diaphragm is 10 times thinner than a human hair, offering incredible poise and precision for reproducing music. This makes for thin speakers that are amazing to hear.

£6,500/pair, quad-hifi.co.uk

2 Cabasse La Sphére

→ Retro sci-fi horror aesthetic meets cutting-edge tech in La Sphére, which features acoustic dampening tech similar to that used on submarines, and four drivers arranged like a lens, powered by custom signal processing tech, to product a fantastic, alive sound. Cabasse come to install every pair sold. *£185,000/pair, cabasse.com/en*

3 KEF Reference 5

→ Reference by name, reference by nature, KEF's highest-end speakers are made with the company's most advanced tech for perfect sound reproduction. Every part is custom, and the range includes speakers of different sizes, including a centre unit and sub, making it perfect for music and home theatre.

£10,499/pair, kef.com



→ Breaking the standard design mould in more ways than one, these speakers each have a single driver for their sound, with a focus on timing and detail over pure frequency reproduction. The speakers aim to match the pace and energy of a live music performance, and they absolutely excel at that.

£6,495/pair, eclipse-td.com

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■ | OCTOBER 2017

SPEAKERS



Meridian Special Edition DSP8000

ightarrow Built by hand, these huge speakers look imposing, and bring awesome sound through their unusual active design. Each DSP8000 unit has all the electronics it needs built in, including five 150w amplifiers to power its eight drivers. That includes DACs and advanced audio processing, because you don't plug a standard speaker cable in here - you use a custom digital Ethernet-like cable, connecting to a source that can take in audio from your vinyl, streaming files or CDs. Best of all, this makes these speakers upgradable - the electronics can be swapped out for even better performance years later.

£43,000/pair, meridian-audio.com



OCTOBER 2017 | T3 SOUND =





Sonus faber **Amati Tradition**

ightarrow As the name implies, these speakers are all about heritage. Sonus faber uses the shape of a lute for its cabinets, though here the inspiration is more from violin makers and the key principles of great instrument design. The elegant curve of the beautifully finished wood pieces is created in the manner of Italy's shipwrights, meant to evoke the wooden-framed motorboats made there. And with the same craft lavished on the four custom drivers and vibration-reducing aluminium frame, the result is a gloriously rich and crisp sound that's as classic as its design.

£23,500/pair, absolutesounds.com



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Utah. The monolithic WAMM is designed around simply perfect timing, thanks to its ability to physically adjust its drivers based on your listening position. A huge amount of other amazing tech goes into your near-million-pound buy, aiming for the most pure musical

reproduction possible. £700,000/pair, absolutesounds.co.uk

Q Audio Concept 500

 \rightarrow Q Acoustics is known for making excellent affordable speakers, but these are undoubtedly high-end. With large drivers designed to give a wide sound and some especially clever ideas for its internal cabinet structure, these reveal a wonderful amount of detail, especially up against more expensive units. They're excellently finished, and look great too, especially in the gloss white colour.

£4,000/pair, qacoustics.co.uk

3 PMC fact.12

ightarrow The pursuit of total clarity and dynamic range drove the development of these speakers, and it shows. PMC's combination of design smarts and unique technology allows for the hand-built and surprisingly slim cabinets to produce amazingly natural sound.

£13,695/pair, pmc-speakers.com







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AMPLIFIERS

Great audio requires the finest preparation – these amps have the magic touch to make your music sound its absolute best









Chord CPA 8000

→ Chord's reference-quality pre-amp is a big, double-height beast, and for good reason. There's a wide range of flexible inputs, with three pairs of balanced outputs and three unbalanced. But we especially love the VU meters in the front, with individual EQ controls for left and right channels.

£27,700, chordelectronics.co.uk

Luxman CL-38suSE

→ Only 100 of these lovingly retro valve pre-amps (and the matching MQ88uSE power amp) are being made. Top-quality valves are sealed in a shielded case with a fine wood finish, and physical controls to play with on the front, including a switch for suppressing vibrations from any warping on older records.

£4,000, luxman.com

Arcam A49

→ Cambridge-based Arcam's top-notch integrated amp is a beautiful-sounding class G unit, which means it uses twin power supplies – one for crystal clear low-power Class A amplification, and a higher-power one when you need the grunt. At 200w per channel, this is power without audio compromise.

£3,999, arcam.co.uk

Dan D'Agostino Monoblock M400

→ This power amp is the latest version of the first product from industry veteran D'Agostino after forming his own company. You can get one for £38,998 and enjoy its meaty, 400w output, but the fun's in getting one per stereo channel for stunning speaker power.

£77,996/pair, absolutesounds.com

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■ | OCTOBER 2017

AMPS

-





Audio Research GSi75

 \rightarrow Perhaps the ultimate all-in-one integrated, this big box is your pre-amp, amp, DAC, phono stage and headphone amp all together. But there's no cutting back on the quality of each part to fit it all in - the DAC is capable of handling everything up to DSD SACD-quality tunes, the headphone amp will pair brilliantly with the best cans, and you can expect all your music to sound poised to perfection, whatever the source. We even love its fairly minimalist look and simple silvery finish.

£14,998 absolutesounds.com



OCTOBER 2017 | T3 SOUND

→ This wonderfully industrial hulk of a machine is McIntosh's most powerful integrated amp ever, pushing out 300w per channel. It's a do-everything amp too, with a superb DAC, a headphone amp and 10 analogue inputs, along with outputs for two pairs of speakers – and at that kind of power rating, they can be any speakers you like.

\$10,500, mcintoshlabs.com

Onkyo M-5000R

→ Available in silver or black, we love the design of this power amp, splashing those VU meters all the way across the front. Twin toroidal transformers handle the power supply, and symmetrical power device alignment for the left and right channels (which can be driven at up to 150w each) keeps the sound natural and error-free.

£2,499, eu.onkyo.com

3 Unison Research S9 Valve Amp

→ For some, only a valve amp will do, and this is a beautiful example. It packs in the latest valve designs for classical sound reproduction that makes appropriately high-end speakers truly sing, and looks just fantastic. And all of this comes in a fairly compact unit.

£6,749, henleydesigns.co.uk







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There's never been an easier way to enjoy better sound, anywhere.

Chord Mojo is a battery-powered, pocket-sized marvel that has won many awards for its performance and design. Simply connect Mojo to your smartphone, tablet, computer, or games console, plug in your headphones and you can experience crystal clear, high-resolution audio the way you would hear it in the recording studio. Easy to use, it's an instant upgrade to your music, movie, TV and gaming enjoyment. Mojo is precision engineered by audio experts in England. Discover the difference Mojo can make to your ears!

- Mojo is the Award-winning way to hear more from your headphones
- Turns your smartphone, tablet or computer into a high-resolution music player, plus boosts sound quality of anything from Spotify to Netflix to gaming!
- Works with any type of smartphone, tablet, computer or games console: Apple, Android, Windows, PC, Mac , Xbox, PS4 and more – Mojo makes them all sound better
- Drives any kind of headphones even two pairs at once!
- Battery-powered, pocket-sized: enjoy better audio anywhere
- Designed and made in England







Available from amazon

chordmojo.com



TURNTABLES

As the world rediscovers the joys of vinyl, rediscover your own favourite records afresh with the incredible sound from these players









Acoustic Signature Invictus

→ 479 hand-constructed parts make up this imposing turntable. It's designed to be incredibly flexible and to support four tonearms simultaneously, so you can choose the right arm and cartridge for a particular album. The result is an impeccable turntable for playing your most-loved records.

£91,990, audioemotion.co.uk

2 Jadis Thalie

→ This turntable was built not just for audio quality, but for reliability. It has only four rotating parts in its mechanism, a synchronous motor means no electronic speed control, and a 50kg granite pedestal and 20kg platter fend off any unwanted vibrations. It's simply all about achieving crystal-clear sound.

£45,000, absolutesounds.com

3 Kronos Pro

→ There are two suspended platters in this turntable, which turn in opposite directions, with the aim of balancing the forces exerted in the unit, keeping the record as stable as possible against vibrations within or without the player. It not only looks really cool, but sounds absolutely amazing.

\$38,000, kronosaudio.com

Pro-Ject Signature 12

→ This elaborate turntable has a number of clever ideas, including magnetic feet that decouple the chassis from the surface to reduce outside vibrations, and a flywheel belt drive that keeps internal interference down. With a single-pivot tonearm and wide cartridge support, you'll get serious love out of your records.

£7,499, henleydesigns.co.uk

T3 SOUND



OCTOBER 2017 |







McIntosh MT5

ightarrow The MT5 doesn't just look like it's come from a retro-future movie, it's made like it's sci-fi too. That glowing acrylic platter is magnetically suspended by two opposing neodymium magnets with just a ceramic shaft acting as a point of rotation, meaning there's almost no friction to interfere with your perfect vinyl audio. It's the same principle as the ClearAudio Statement on the previous page, and the tonearm also uses magnets for exceptional stabilisation. It makes for a stunning-looking machine, unlike anything else out there, and with McIntosh's nearly 70 years of audio expertise, it sounds just as brilliant.

£7,495, mcintoshlabs.com

T3 SOUND | OCTOBER 2017



Get the most from your CDs, hi-res files and streaming music services with these audiophile-level players









V

Metronome Technologie MC1

→ This is the first music server from French digital specialist Metronome. It's all about the hi-res audio, with support for FLAC, WAV, DSD files and more. Slide your CDs into the slot and it will rip them automatically at lossless quality. You can then choose what to play through the touchscreen or app.

£11,200, absolutesounds.com

2 L

Luxman D-380

→ This CD player hasn't hit the UK yet, but we're really excited about its audio chops, which includes the option to output through pure solid state circuitry, or via a vacuum tube, visible through the front of the machine. You just flick a switch on the front to choose the sound approach you want.

£4,000, luxman.com



Leema Acoustics Sirius Music Server

→ Leema, founded by ex-BBC engineers, steps into the digital world with this streaming server, which can store from 2TB to 8TB of music (you can rip CDs to the hard disk right from its CD slot), and is UPNP/DLNA compatible. It supports a wide range of files, but right at the heart is a high-quality DAC.

£3,995, leema-acoustics.com



Onkyo C-7000R

→ This reference-grade CD player features separate digital and analogue circuitry to keep different parts of the audio as clean as possible, packed in an anti-vibration casing. Ultra-low jitter technology keeps timing precise, while a silent disc mechanism ensures the only sound is clear CD playback.

£1,499, uk.onkyo.com/en

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■ | OCTOBER 2017

PLAYERS

17





dCS Vivaldi One

 \rightarrow For the ultimate deluxe hi-fi set-up, only a 24-karat gold player will do... The Vivaldi One is a CD/ SACD transport and network player (complete with Vivaldi's own class-leading Ring DAC) that doesn't compromise on luxury inside or out. The basic £55,000 cost gets you anodised black or silver, but you can get it coated in chrome, nickel or, yes, gold (£11,000 extra). It can play lossless files streamed or attached on a USB drive in any format, including the new MQA (Master Quality Authenticated) format for studioquality playback. Only 250 players will be made, to commemorate dCS's 30th anniversary.

From £55,000, absolutesounds.com



OCTOBER 2017 | T3 SOUND =

Metronome Technologie Kalista DreamPlay & DAC

ightarrow This pairing of CD transport (the £35,000 Kalista DreamPlay CD) and DAC (the £37,000 Kalista DAC) combine into maybe the best CD-playing experience on the planet. Every hand-built Kalista DreamPlay goes through individual testing to make sure its sound is perfect, while the DAC (which works with any digital source) actually features two different converter chips, each giving a different sound, so you can choose the balance for your favourite dics.

£72,000, absolutesounds.com

Naim Uniti Nova

ightarrow The Uniti Nova is Naim's reference level all-in-one streaming system, combining Wi-Fi smarts, hi-res audio playback and even an 80w per channel amp all in a tidy package. It can stream music via Apple AirPlay, Chromecast, TIDAL, Spotify and other services, and play back files stored on a USB drive or SD card. It's a great multi-room option for audiophiles.

£4,099, naimaudio.co.uk

Esoteric Grandioso K-01x

ightarrow The pinnacle of Japanese company Esoteric's range of SACD players, the Grandioso K-01x features all of its most advanced tech. The custom CD loading system is built for micron-level control and weighs 5kg on its own, while the dual mono digital-to-analogue conversion system keeps both channels separate and supercrisp. As a bonus, it can handle DSD and PCM over USB too, for extra flexibility.

£16,000, esoteric.jp







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Your music collection reimagined. Discover infinite possibilities...

Uniti



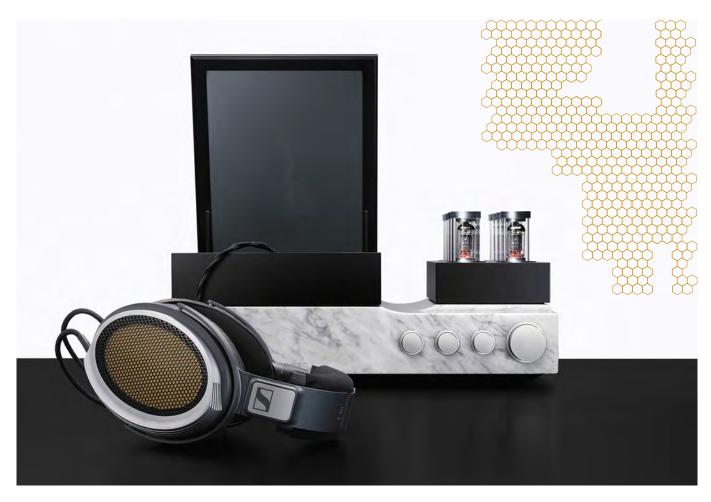
Uniti Atom is a beautifully compact multi-source music player that will seduce with exceptional performance and outstanding aesthetics. Its 40W integrated amplifier and high resolution music streaming capabilities will flood any room with incredible sound. Uniti Atom serves perfectly as a high-end main system, or even for use in the kitchen or study, where space is at a premium. Its charming good looks and even better sound will make you wonder how you ever lived without it. Just add speakers.

Experience at our network of specialist audio retailers and naimaudio.com.



HEADPHONES

Tune out the world for a while with the beautiful, crystal-clear sound from these amazing headphonesy



Sennheiser HE 1

 \rightarrow At launch, the HE 1 was the most expensive set of headphones on the planet, and the best sounding - the latter might still be true. These electrostatic cans come with a special valve amp, and together they form a single unit, with all the controls, and even a case to store the cans in. The base of the amp unit is Carrara marble - the material used by Michelangelo to sculpt David while eight beautiful valves rise up and out of the amp when in use, then retract as you turn it off. This is industrial design as performance art, made to match your love of your

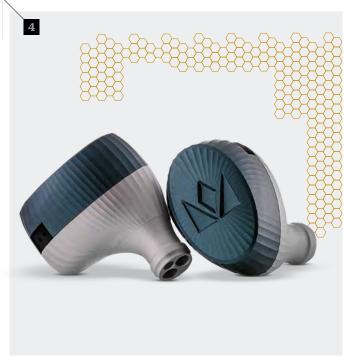
music, and it's just incredible. £35,000, en-uk.sennheiser.com











Stax SR009

→ Electrostatic headphones are thought to be the best in the business, thanks to the single ultra-thin membrane that's vibrated by differences in charge, rather than a magnetic driver system. It makes these headphones extremely nimble, recreating the original source audio with perfect clarity.

£3,495, kjwestone.co.uk



→ To get the most out of electrostatic headphones like our Stax SR009, you need a special headphone amp, delivering extra power to 'energise' their membranes. The iESL is designed for exactly this, ensuring that the transparency and clarity they're known for gets carried through perfectly.

£1,395, ifi-audio.com

3 Copland DAC 215

→ Give your high-tech 'phones classic power with this valvebased headphone amp and DAC. A reference-quality DAC in a quad mono configuration provides a brilliant analogue output to the twin valves, which peek through the grille of the fascia. Digital audio comes in from USB, or two optical inputs. *£1,998, absolutesounds.com*

4 Noble Audio Kaiser Encorer

→ These hand-assembled in-ear monitors pack in a whopping 10 drivers per ear, delivering sumptuous professional-quality sound that's full of detail and spatial representation. They're sensitive enough to be a good fit for elevating smartphone music, but pair them with a proper DAC to reach their full potential.

£1,699, nobleaudio.co.uk/en

OCTOBER 2017 | T3 SOUND



 \rightarrow We've looked at electrostatic over-ear headphones, but Shure brings the tech to in-ear lovers with the KSE1500. The unit includes not just the two sound-isolating earpieces, but also a special DAC to give them the power they need, with a customisible EQ built in, so you can tune their output exactly how you like it.

£2,549, shure.co.uk



 \rightarrow Audeze's LCD-4 headphones are among the best in the world, and these offer the same design principles shrunk for in-ear use. The planar magnetic driver delivers a more controlled sound than a regular cone driver, especially in lower frequencies, with practically no distortion across the range, allowing you to hear meticulous detail in your music. They're handcrafted with kevlar and magnesium for a perfect, high-quality build, and weight just 12g per ear.

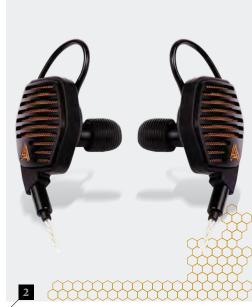
£2,399, audeze.com

3 Focal Utopia Tournaire

 \rightarrow Focal's Utopia are a truly astounding set of headphones, that use special Beryllium drivers to deliver fantastically real audio, - perfect for those who want to hear to truth of an instrumental live recording. You can get a regular set from £3,499, but where's the fun in that? Focal worked with French jeweller Tournaire to produce this special edition set, finished in 18-karat gold and with 6.5 carats of diamonds inlaid. (And don't forget the €10k optional stand!)

€100,000, focal.com







T3 SOUND OCTOBER 2017

CHORD ELECTRONICS HUGO 2

Get studio-grade sound quality delivered to your headphones and home audio system with the processing power in Chord Electronics' new Hugo 2



British expertise is at the forefront of the new audio revolution. Getting studio-grade sound quality from your favourite music, however it's stored or wherever it's located, is now a reality using no more than a smartphone, as long as you have the right tech by your side. Chord Electronics' new Hugo 2 is a unique proposition.

Whether streaming from Spotify or Tidal, playing networked or music stored on your phone, or even hooking up your old CD player, your most-loved tracks, playlists and albums can now be delivered with sound quality that was unthinkable just a few years ago.

Chord Electronics, a world leader in digital audio based in Kent, has designed the Hugo 2 with unrivalled amounts of audio processing power and enough proprietary technology to deliver music in sparkling high definition, whatever the format.

Designed and manufactured in Britain, Hugo 2 is a headphone

amplifier and digital-to-analogue converter (DAC) that connects smart devices, PCs and Macs, gaming consoles and virtually anything with a digital output, to headphones and home audio systems, turning digital signals into sparkling analogue sound.

Chord's award-winning proprietary hardware and custom software processes your device's audio with PC-like computing power, delivering higher-resolution results from ordinary digital files; even basic MP3s can

be dramatically improved with the right audio know-how, and no-one knows how better than Chord.

Connection is via a 'HD' Micro USB, plus there's Bluetooth and two further digital inputs. There are two headphone sockets, plus RCA connections for home audio systems. A rechargeable battery gives seven hours of playback, so Hugo 2 can travel, too. Whatever the format, Hugo 2 makes it shine.

£1,800, chordelectronics.co.uk

PORTABLE

You don't have to be at home to enjoy hi-res audio. Get the hi-fi experience on the move with these players



Astell & Kern **A&ultima SP1000**

 \rightarrow This music player is packed with technical prowess, from its eight-core processor that makes it fast to use, to dual DACs for the most accurate representation of both audio channels, to balanced and unbalanced output, and a gorgeous stainless steel design. There's Wi-Fi and Bluetooth (including high-res aptX support), and it has 256GB of built-in storage for your files (FLAC, DSD, ALAC and everything else is supported), and can take a 256GB microSD card for over 500GB of music in total.

£3,299, astellnkern.com







ightarrow This media player includes two DACs, one devoted to each channel, to help fill out the sound and ensure an especially clear and detailed mid-range. It's clever when it comes to the amp too - the board is actually replaceable, so you can tailor it with a range of options, no matter whether you've got precision in-ear monitors or big open over-ear cans. There's wide lossless format support. including DSD, with your files stored on SD card up to 256GB. £1,099, hifiman.com



 \rightarrow Get support for not just the standard DSD, FLAC, PCM and other lossless music files, but also the newer MQA masters-quality format with this compact player. Two DACs bring transparency to your audio, feeding twin amps. Twin clocks for different sampling rates reduce jitter, too. It can power just about any headphones despite being much cheaper than the other options here, and is absolutely still built for audiophile sound quality.

£349, pioneer-audiovisual.eu

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AUDEZE

ISINE

THE WORLD'S FINEST IN-EAR HEADPHONE

3.5MM COMPATIBLE



- World's first full-range planar magnetic in-ear headphones.
- Featuring Fluxor™ Magnets, 30mm planar magnetic diaphragms and patented Uniforce™ Voice-Coil technology.
- Delivering precise control and fast response times without distortion.
- Available with standard 3.5mm connection or also with Audeze's acclaimed Apple Lightning CIPHER cable. Ideal for iPhone 7.
- Start with the iSine 10, or step up to the iSine 20, with an even longer Uniforce voicecoil for enhanced bass, clarity and imaging.





"A seriously impressive in-ear that sounds exceptional, particularly for users of Apple devices" - Hi-Fi Choice







Available now from





ACCESSORIES

Don't forget the vital extras that elevate an impressive system to a truly deluxe hi-fi experience









Arcam rPlay

→ Got a classic hi-fi set-up that hasn't made it into the streaming age yet? Arcam's rPlay adds a whole bunch of wireless tech to your system, including Apple AirPlay, DTS PlayFi, Tidal, Spotify and more – and running through top-end audio tech to make it sound as good as any other source.

£399, arcam.co.uk

Clearaudio Magnify Hybrid

→ If you want the best from your beautifully designed turntable, you've got to get a tonearm to match. The carbon fibre construction and hybrid ball and magnet bearings here are made to ensure it doesn't interfere with the sound, and it works with a range of cartridges. It's even nice and easy to set up.

£2,525, clearaudio.de

Audiophilebase Starbase

→ So many products here are filled with tech to cut back on vibrations, so help them out with shelves specially designed for this purpose. The StarBase's platforms are supported by beams that cantilever at the ends, with a damper to absorb any vibration force, so your equipment always stays still.

£399, audiophilebase.com

The Chord Company Sarum T

→ You want to get pristine audio from amp to speaker, but skimp on the cable and you can undo all the good work of those hi-fi crafters. The Sarum T cables are made to get your music there without colouring it at all, thanks to a Taylum coating and individually shielded high-purity silver conductors.

From £1,800, chord.co.uk

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SPIDER-MAN

HOMEC OMING

ONLY AT CINEMAS



R SERIES SWING INTO ACTION

To celebrate the cinema release of Spider-Man™: Homecoming, KEF is offering the chance to win a first rate KEF R Series Dolby Atmos® home cinema speaker system, a luxury break to New York City or a KEF EGG Wireless Digital Music System.

VISIT UK.KEF.COM TO BE IN WITH A CHANCE TO WIN!

Staggeringly realistic 3D sound – audio that moves around you with all the web-slinging action!

#SpiderManHomecoming

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Astell&Kern

A&ultima SP1000

INTRODUCING A TRULY **LUXURY LISTEN**



Introducing the Astell&Kern A&ultima SP1000, a new flagship player that changes what is possible from portable audio, in terms of both performance and desirability. The SP1000 takes the awardwinning success of the AK380, launched two years ago, and raises the quality bar for high-resolution sound on the move.

Available now in Stainless Steel and Copper editions

































