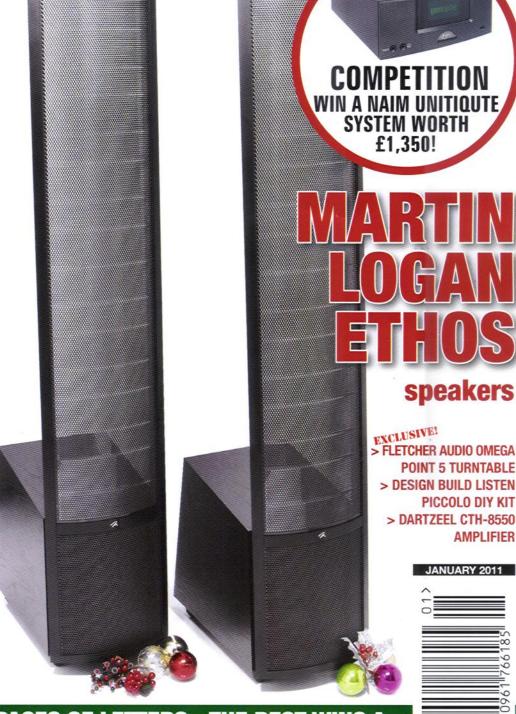




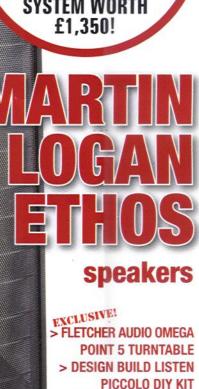
INSPIRE ECLIPSE SE12 turntable



PIONEER BDP-LX53 Blu-ray player



10 PAGES OF LETTERS - THE BEST WINS A PAIR OF KEF 1Q30 LOUDSPEAKERS! (UK ONLY)



AMPLIFIER





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STAND MOUNT SPEAKER

WINNER: ELAC BS243

or those reviewers ensconced in their audiophile ivory towers, a sub-£1,000 speaker can be a shocking thing. If you listen to Martin Logan electrostatics at ten times the price as a matter of routine, putting up with the vagaries of a budget box boofing and booming is a pretty unsavoury experience! With this in mind, it's rare to find a reasonably priced loudspeaker that isn't holed below the waterline, so to speak, by variously poor cabinetry, weak drive units or simply its box-loudspeaker-with-moving coildrivers orientation...

It was with great relief then, that we auditioned the £1,000 Elac BS243, only to find an exceptionally couth sounding small standmounter. It's no

fluke either; Elac's use of their JET ribbon tweeter is the hi-fi equivalent of a turbo charger; it magically wipes away so many of the pitfalls of small speakers by using a superb treble transducer that wouldn't disgrace a speaker at several times the price. It's a great device and all it has to do is integrate well with a decent mid/bass driver and a solid (285x170x232mm) cabinet for big audio dynamite. Fortunately, unlike certain other ribbon/moving coil drive unit pairings, Elac have got it right; the JET tweeter integrates smoothly with the Elac Crystal AS-XR aluminium sandwich mid/bass unit and the cabinet doesn't draw attention to itself either.

Hooked up to a beefy transistor amplifier (if it's valves you're running they've got to be particularly punchy) and a decent front end, the Elacs really take your breath away. They're far more sophisticated than is expected at the price, with none of the squawking, screeching and boofing of many sub-£1,000 standmounters. The BS243's inherently transparent nature, allied to realistic three dimensional imaging, rhythmic alacrity and extended, delicate and sparkling treble make them an essential audition for those looking for grownup transducers that take up a small space. They proved an unexpectedly pleasant surprise, and as such are worthy winners of an already hotly contested category.

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