

Head master

Arcam's classy rHead amp gives headphones a boost

Essential buy

Pro-Ject's value vinyl spinner is a knockout



Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

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Best of British

Home-grown amps put the music first

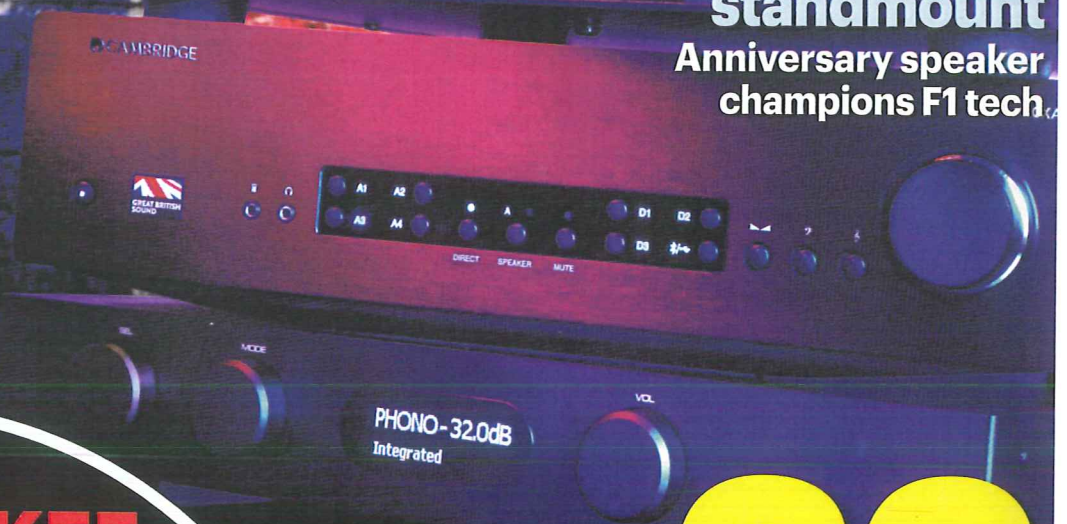
THE KNOWLEDGE

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Las Vegas show report inside!



PMC twenty5
standmount
Anniversary speaker champions F1 tech



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Buckle up

Sonus faber's first headphone is achingly chic, but **Ed Selley** wonders if it can match the style with a decent performance

If you have a brand reputation for making beautiful loudspeakers, moving into another area can be fraught with complications as you struggle to achieve the same elegance but in a different medium. Nonetheless, Sonus faber launched the Pryma sub brand of headphones back in 2016, and the Pryma 01 is the first model to hit the market.

It adheres to the 'nomad' category of headphone, meaning that it's smaller than a true home headphone for use on the move but up to the job of home use if desired. Each enclosure completely covers the ear and contains a 40mm dynamic driver made from Mylar. The quoted performance figures look entirely competitive and, on paper at least, this is a serious multi-use model.

As a Sonus faber design, efforts have been made to ensure that it looks and feels a cut above the competition. It comes in a variety of finishes that range from the black and brushed metal of the review sample to a rather more subtle combination of white and brown, which is referred to as coffee

and cream. The quality of the materials and the way they are assembled is very impressive, and the result is a solidly elegant design.

It isn't without some quirks, though. The headband and earpads are separate from one another and instead of a conventional slider, they attach by inserting the clip of the earpad into a series of holes in the headband before rotating to secure it. It is clever, but I'm not entirely sure I can see any benefit over a regular slide headband – particularly as the hole spacings are unlikely to provide an optimum fit for all and each earpad is connected by a cable.

Sound quality

In use the Pryma 01 has a few immediate standout traits that in some ways replicate the behaviour of Sonus faber's box loudspeakers. Connected to the Oppo HA-2 SE (see p61), the most significant impression that comes across is that this is an extremely easy headphone to listen to for long periods of time. There is no shortage of treble energy, but it is consistently delivered with an almost

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Sonus faber
Pryma 01

ORIGIN
Italy

TYPE
Over ear, closed-back headphones

WEIGHT
355g

FEATURES
• 2x 40mm Mylar Dynamic Driver
• Quoted sensitivity: 118dB/mW
• Detachable 1.3m cable with 3.5mm jack

DISTRIBUTOR
Absolute Sounds

TELEPHONE
0208 9713909

WEBSITE
pryma.com

liquid quality that never sounds harsh or thin. There is also no shortage of bass. Listening to the Ramin Djawadi score for *Westworld*, the electronically augmented orchestra has a real sense of scale and presence to it. There is also an impressive openness to the way that material of this scale is handled. For a closed-back headphone, the Pryma 01 does a fine job of opening the sound beyond the confines of the earpads.

Where the performance is less confident is the midrange. Like the upper registers, this is smooth, natural and unfailingly easy to listen to, but it always feels somewhat recessed in comparison with the bass and treble output. Switching to the studiously neutral Chord Electronics Mojo (*HFC* 405) doesn't do very much to alter this balance. There is a positive to this, though, that suggests that it might be at least partly intentional. If you use the headphone on the move and in noisy locations, the slightly boosted extremities tend to even out slightly, making it well adapted for use out and about. The performance also holds up well when you switch to compressed media like Spotify and internet radio services. Whether Sonus faber has looked at the likely usage patterns for its headphone and tweaked it accordingly isn't clear, but it certainly works out that way.

Conclusion

The Pryma 01 is a slightly curious headphone. It is unquestionably attractive and it feels special to use without being impractical. What it cannot do so effectively is act as a true all-rounder in the manner that some rivals can, and when compared with more specialised 'nomad' headphones, it feels a little lacking in features and practicality. It certainly has considerable promise, but doesn't quite manage to deliver that decisive knockout blow ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY

★★★★★

LIKE: Handsome looks; comfort; excellent build

VALUE FOR MONEY

★★★★★

DISLIKE: Headband buckle; recessed midrange

BUILD QUALITY

★★★★★

WE SAY: A good-looking headphone with many likeable features, but it isn't a complete all-rounder

FEATURES

★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★