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MARCH 2010

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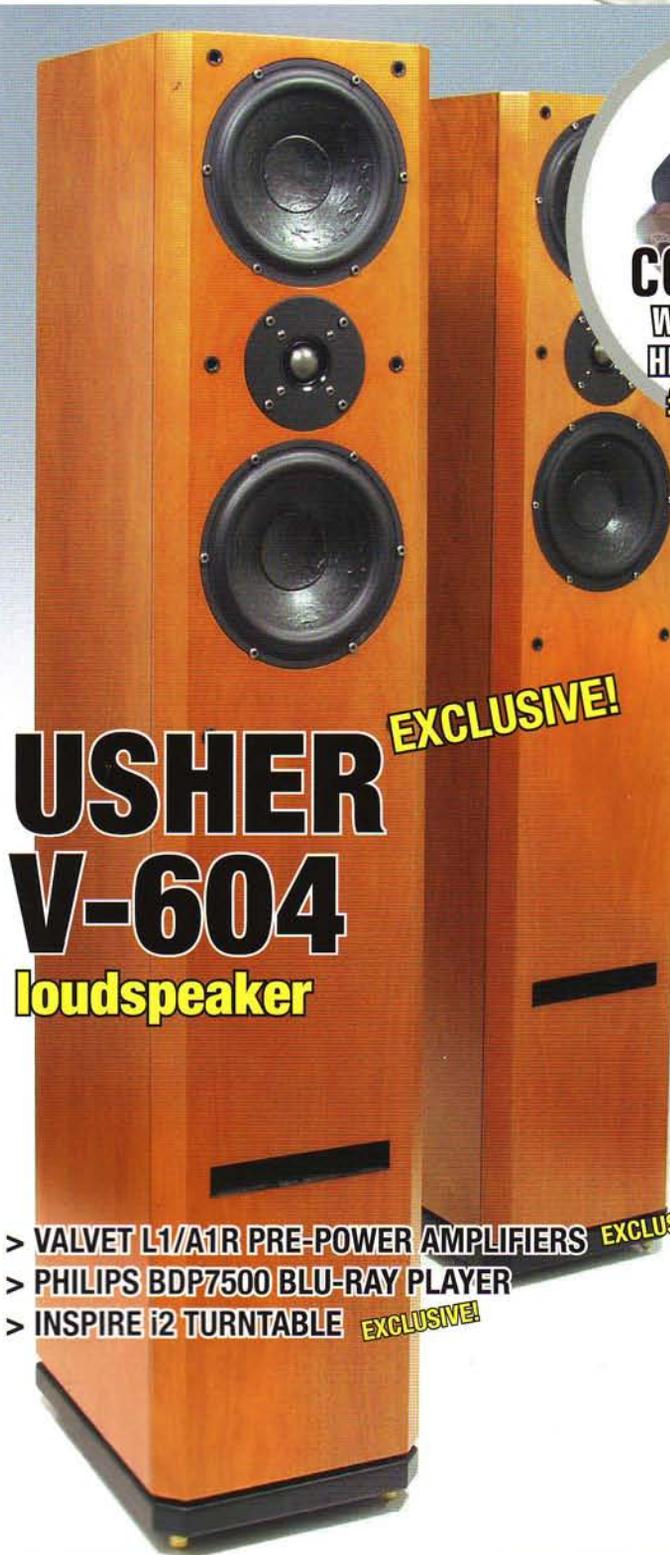


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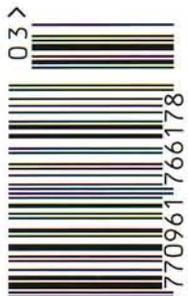
COMPETITION
WIN GRADO GS1000i
HEADPHONES WORTH
£1,000! (UK ONLY)

TUNER GROUP TEST

- Cyrus FM6
- Creek Destiny
- NAD Master M4
- Micromega FM10
- Myryad MXT4000

- > VALVET L1/A1R PRE-POWER AMPLIFIERS **EXCLUSIVE!**
- > PHILIPS BDP7500 BLU-RAY PLAYER
- > INSPIRE i2 TURNTABLE **EXCLUSIVE!**

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13 PAGES OF LETTERS - THE BEST WINS A PAIR OF KEF IQ30 LOUDSPEAKERS! (UK ONLY)





MICROMEGA FM-10 £700

This has a surprisingly sombre appearance for a French product. Bland it may be but the cabinet is certainly solid; there appears to be more metal

in it than in an entire Renault 4! Inside, Micromega have chosen *not* to go down the OEM receiver module route, instead they've used a small 'tuner' unit to feed an intermediate frequency amplifier, detector and stereo decoder circuit of their own design, based mainly around integrated circuits from Sanyo.

Micromega haven't provided a remote control unit or much in the way of cables but they've tried to make up for this by including a pair of white gloves instead; whether this means that the surfaces are particularly sensitive to finger grease or that an unusually large number of Micromega owners are also snooker referees, I don't know. The instructions are also only written in French, which is not a trivial point, as I was to find out later. Donning the white gloves, one soon discovers that the controls are a tactile delight. The rotary encoder tuning knob is perfectly scaled, just the right amount of twiddling is required to tune between the stations, it is neither laborious nor imprecise. The six metal push buttons are also just about perfect in their feel and weighting, even if their marking and functions are less than clear to the new user.

SOUND QUALITY

The Micromega's front panel has a little emblem that says 'HD Audio'. It's not clear exactly what this is (new owner Didier Hamdi's initials in reverse perhaps?) but the text looks a lot like the logo for HD television; let's hope that the Micromega circuit conveys emotion better than HD TV

conveys motion (e.g. not very well)! Our measurements show that the FM-10 has an extended and broadly flat bass response and a sloping off treble which kicks up again just before the 19kHz pilot tone filter cuts things off completely. This profile gives the Micromega a sound quality that is pure high end European; a wave of warm bass rolls out of the loudspeakers, bringing a toe tapping quality to music that so many tuners completely fail to capture. This is as nothing to the treble however, which is just about as creamy as I've heard from a modern design. Because the Micromega begins to roll off slightly earlier than is strictly necessary it doesn't have the sparkle of some of the tuners in this test but what is there is simply sublime. Amongst all this the midrange does sound a little recessed, but that's simply because it's not brash or 'in your face' like many rivals. Soundstaging also nicely expansive, with fine depth

perspective too.

Initially I was annoyed to find that whilst the FM-10 would tune into most of my favourite stations, it would instantly mute LBC Radio, even though I lie outside the service area it normally comes in okay with just a little background hiss on most tuners. Searching through the menu I found that the tuner comes set to 'cable' mode from the factory, you have to change this to 'antenna' to retard the muting action. Doing this also reveals a digital signal strength meter; the only other tuner in this test to have this feature is the NAD at twice the price. Accessing the setting is easy, changing it is less so until you discover that the standby key is the one you have to use, *Sacre Bleu!* Confusing menus aside, the FM-10 impressed me a lot and can be especially recommended for use in systems that tend to sound a bit dry with other sources - but do invest in a good aerial.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

A conspicuous weakness of the FM-10 was unusually low sensitivity. It needed no less than 3.8mV to reach full quieting (via Antenna), where most tuners need 1mV at most. Given the sort of signal level common from a decent aerial, around 0.6mV, hiss measured an audible -55dB, not a good result. The FM-10 needs a very good aerial and/or use close to a transmitter to get hiss suppressed to the decent -69dB it is capable of.

With falling treble visible in the frequency response plot, measuring -2dB at 10kHz the sound balance will be on the warm side. Low frequency extension was good however, so the FM-10 may well sound quite full bodied.

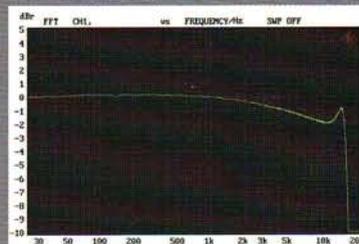
Distortion was very low, even at full modulation (i.e. music peaks) and pilot tone is effectively filtered out.

The signal strength indicator registered 0 only with aerial disconnected and maximum (9) with 1uV or just a finger on the aerial socket. It was useless.

The FM-10 will sound quite warm, possibly full bodied. But low sensitivity will make it hissy unless given a very strong aerial signal. NK

Frequency response	5Hz-5.5kHz
Stereo separation	37dB
Distortion (50% mod.)	0.07%
Hiss (CCIR)	-69dB
Signal for minimum hiss	3.8mV
Sensitivity	
mono	42µV
stereo	300µV
signal strength meter:	
output	none
	1.7V

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



VERDICT

Outstanding sounding tuner with superlative construction quality at the price, but needs a good aerial to sing.

MICROMEGA FM-10 £700
Absolute Sounds
 ☎ +44(0)20 8971 3909
www.absolutesounds.com

FOR

- bass richness
- treble refinement
- excellent build quality

AGAINST

- mediocre sensitivity
- confusing keys and menu
- instructions in French only!