

NIFTY NETWORK PLAYERS

Cambridge Audio CXN

→ Cambridge makes some of the finest music systems around, and the CXN network player is a fine addition to that lineage. It has a gloriously slim, floating design that's simply beautiful; and the sound quality, if anything, surpasses that. The powerful digital engine

upsamples your tunes to 24-bit/384kHz Hi-Res quality, then passes them via twin Wolfson WM8740 DACs in dual-differential configuration to give the ultimate in tonal clarity. Even at £700, it's a real bargain. **£700, cambridgeaudio.com**



Marantz NA6005

→ It's perhaps a little unfair that Marantz has a reputation for ugly but effective amps, because the NA6005 is a nice-looking, chunky network player. And it's capable of top-notch sound thanks to Marantz's renowned HDAM technology, which delivers an ultra-high slew rate and bandwidth to deliver audio quality to please the purists. It's also very affordable. **£299, marantz.co.uk**



Pioneer N-70A

→ We all know that you can't beat Pioneer for big sound, and if you want punchy performance from your network player, you should definitely consider the N-70A. It's a discreet and affordable way to get Hi-Res audio (right up to 32-bit/384kHz), and DSD files up to 5.6MHz, to reverberate around your living room. **£899, pioneer.eu**

Yamaha R-N301

→ This Yamaha looks way more expensive than it actually is. It has the build quality of a 1980s Mercedes-Benz, and in much the same way that retro Mercs purr, this network player effortlessly delivers rich, Hi-Res sounds – although an Ethernet connection is recommended for 24-bit/192kHz FLAC/WAV files. The R-N301 is a real streaming bargain! **£219, uk.yamaha.com**

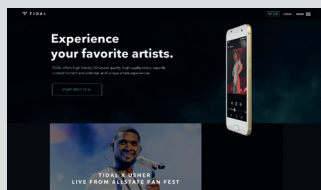


NIFTY NETWORK PLAYERS

How to... Get the best Hi-Res Audio set-up

You're going to need a stable, solid network, the right player and the best-quality source files

→ For the very best audio quality, you need wires. However, with the emergence of Hi-Res Audio, you can have a wireless set-up that gets close enough for all but the purist. Firstly, you need a fast broadband connection with minimal dropout. Get hold of a specialist router and ensure you have no Wi-Fi black spots – a decent Wi-Fi range extender or booster will eliminate those bad signal areas around the home. Then you



need a Hi-Res network player, and to pair it to the best-quality speakers you can afford – this should be your biggest financial outgoing – but do ensure that they're a good fit for your amplifier. Test the speakers out in-store, and bring your amp with you if possible.

Finally, it's no good having a stunning audio set-up if you're listening to lo-fi music. To make the most of your favourite albums, you should go for CD-quality files (ALAC or FLAC). You can even stream FLAC using Tidal. For the ultimate sound, you'll want 24-bit files, available from the likes of Qobuz or HDTracks (which you can play by attaching a NAS or HDD to your network player).



■ Linn Majik DSM

→ Linn is renowned for its high-quality audio products, and the Majik DSM doesn't disappoint. Understated in its design but capable of pure, unadulterated sonic beauty, it'll handle any format you throw at it (and has 15 inputs). Plus, its Space Optimisation tech means you don't have to have your speakers in an optimum listening position. Impressive.

£2,695, linn.co.uk



■ Google Chromecast Audio

→ Google's ingenious little hockey puck will turn your existing audio equipment into a network player. It'll stream Hi-Res Audio (albeit at 24-bit/96kHz), and if you buy more than one of them (hardly a massive outlay), you can create a multi-room system with your old gear. Now, that's amazing.

£30, google.com/chromecast



■ Onkyo TX-8150

→ If you like your sounds smooth, try out Onkyo's latest audio streamer: a 32-bit/384kHz Asahi Kasei DAC decodes a digital source like George Clooney borrowing a cup of sugar, meaning the TX-8150 delivers rich, velvety audio whether its sourced from AirPlay or your vinyl collection. Oh, and did you know 'Onkyo' means 'audio' in Japanese?

£549, uk.onkyo.com

■ Denon CEOL RCDN9

→ Denon's CEOL range is super-stylish, and it backs that up with decent performance. This includes the all-important FLAC 24-bit/192kHz compatibility, streaming from NAS, computers, mobile devices, the internet, via Wi-Fi, Ethernet, Bluetooth and USB. But it's really about the looks. Mmm, Denon.

£249, denon.co.uk



■ TEAC NT-503DAB

The NT-503DAB supports Hi-Res Audio over USB, and Hi-Res streaming over a network; plus it upscales to 12.2MHz DSD and 384kHz PCM. As the name suggests, it adds DAB/

DAB+ skills to its weaponry, and it has a pleasingly minimal fascia, too. Not bad for something the size of a ream of A4 paper.

£949, teac-audio.eu

