



competitive in terms of features (including RDS and remote control), build and component quality. Recommendation is thus in order.

(Reviewed issue 120)

harman/kardon TU9400 – £300 (Recommended)

Recommended back in issue 93's supplement (four years ago), the £300 TU9400 is not the cheapest h/k offering currently around, nor does it have the remote control and more advanced tuning facilities of the upmarket 9600. Instead, it concentrates on quality circuitry throughout, in the interests of delivering superior sound quality.

It's a good-looking slimline package with gently curved fascia, the preset memory using a 3x8 configuration to store up to 24 channels across FM and MW and LW AM bands. There are no options to alter IF selectivity or RF strength, though 'high blend' can improve noise with weak stereo signals. The row of signal strength LEDs cover a useful range.

Lab tests reveal quite high useable sensitivity and very respectable performance throughout, with low distortion, decent enough noise figures, and even relatively low AM distortion. The listening panel responded very positively to its open and dynamic sound, particularly praising the realistic texture of massed strings, and the generosity of the whole recorded acoustic. All of which provides plenty of reason why this fine tuner is still going strong several years after its original introduction.

(Reviewed issue 93)

Linn Kremlin – £1,779 (Recommended)

Linn's £1,779 *Kremlin* is one of the most expensive tuners around, justified perhaps by its prodigious component count and considerable circuit complexity. Remote controlled from a button-rich system handset, this demure and discreet FM-only unit has compact midi-width metal casework. Ergonomics are quite friendly, aided by an exceptional digital signal-strength meter, but not by the rather small display.

Technically, this tuner has a fixed and fairly wide selectivity, opting to maximise sound quality at the expense of digging out weak distant stations close to strong local ones. Front-end overload behaviour is particularly robust, however, which is good news for anyone living close to a powerful transmitter.

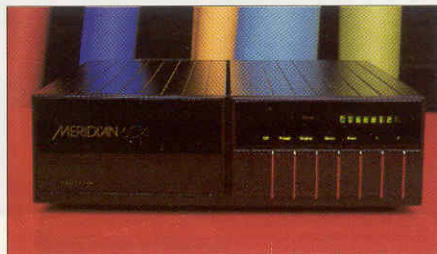
The sound quality was not to every panellist's taste, some finding it a little coloured and aggressive. Others – myself included – were very impressed by fine coherence and lack of times-mear. Whatever, the *Kremlin* has an exciting and invigorating sound, but one that is not necessarily a comfortable experience.

The lack of tight selectivity option may limit its appeal to the long distance radio enthusiast, but the 'bullet-proof' front-end should ensure fine consistency under difficult conditions, and the sound quality positions it among the few exceptional performers around, with its own unique character and strength.

(Reviewed issue 120)

Meridian 604 (Recommended)

Meridian's £1,350 604 FM-only 'digital wireless' is clearly primarily intended to be used as part of a



Above; harman/kardon's TU-9400 pretends not to notice the TU-9600 on its back. Left; Linn's *Kremlin* wins another award for discretion and below left; Meridian's 604 sets out to completely realign our attitudes to control ergonomics.

as an independent standalone tuner. But it clearly makes sense in a complete 600-series Meridian system context.

(Reviewed issue 120)

Mission Cyrus FM7 £400

What a beautiful looking piece of kit. Mission's new

Cyrus FM-only tuner costs a not inconsiderable £400, but it shouldn't find any difficulty attracting buyers amongst those who put the quality packaging packaging and presentation high up their list of priorities.

Four factors set it apart. Matching the Cyrus amps and power supplies, it's half the width of 'standard' hi-fi separates, with the flexibility to be stacked or set side by side. Cast alloy casework will always look and feel better than plastic or bent metal alternatives, especially with such a cunningly-sculptured fascia. Then there's a real analogue-style (though not flywheel-weighted) tuning knob, set alongside a large and softly backlit LCD type display which includes rather neat graphics for signal strength or fine-tune.

That aside, simplicity is the key, with a rather modest complement of seven presets (a sufficiency for most methinks), and no selectivity or aerial attenuation options. There is also some (unspecified) remote-control capability via Mission's classy system remote (not supplied). However, the tuning procedures are ideal, with inter-station muting in scan mode alongside the opportunity to search continuously with the manual knob through unmuted grunge for something interesting.

That said, our air-check procedures showed that this tuner falls well short of the ideal for distant station, weak signal reception. This is mainly due to its basic sensitivity being fairly modest, even though strong signal intermodulation effects are well handled.

