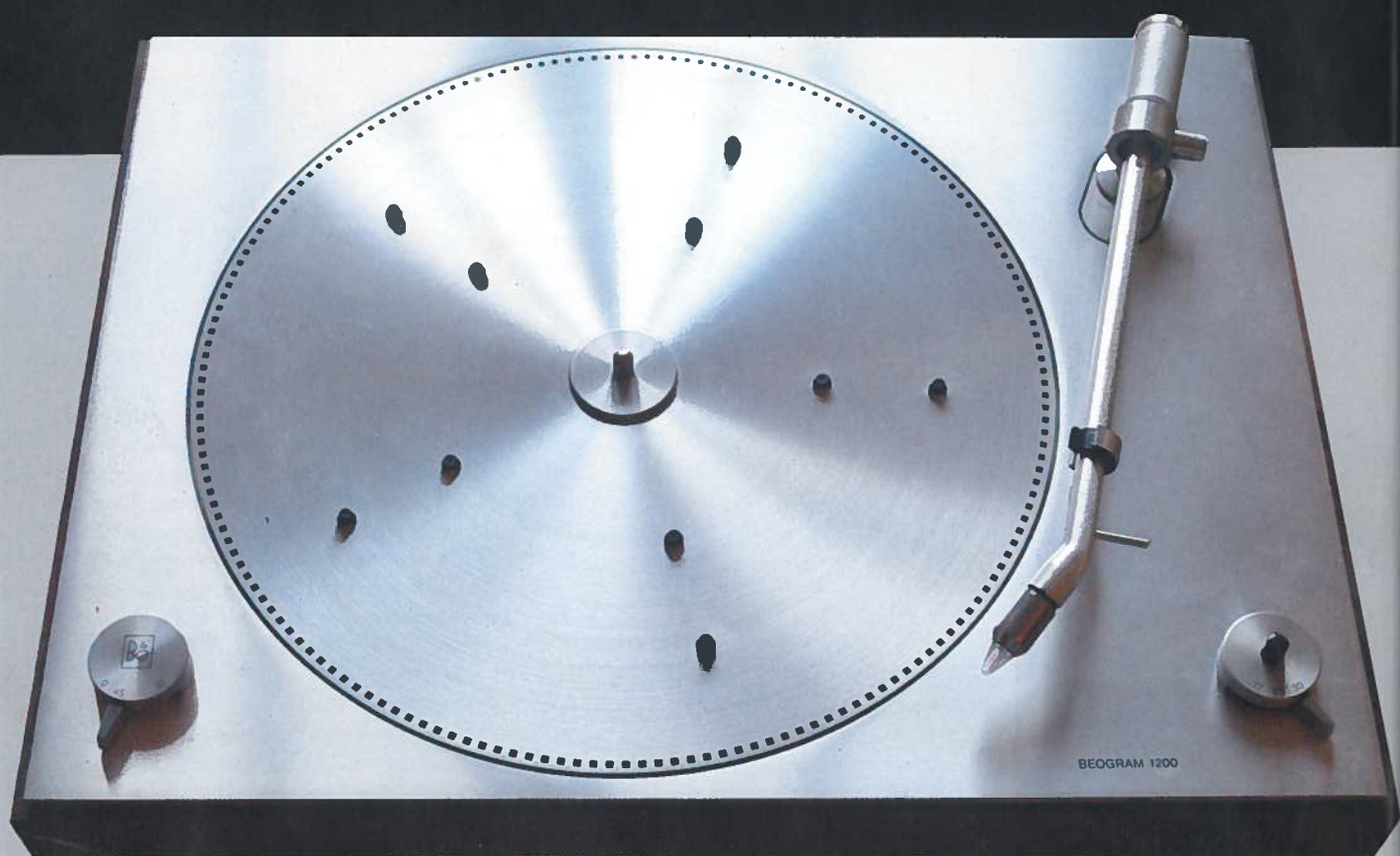


SOULING

FOR CLASSIC VINYL OR IPOD STREAMING, WHEN IT COMES TO VINTAGE HI-FI IT'S GOT TO BE BANG & OLUFSEN, SAYS COLIN PILL



AT THE HEART of the vintage world is the great, eternal truth that, while fashions come and go, quality stays. And that means the canny buyer who's ahead of the curve can snap up the very best at bargain prices. Take music systems. Once upon a time, top-of-the-range Bang & Olufsen was the dream of every hi-fi aficionado; then, suddenly, it looked like it was destined for the dustbin of history as MP3 software rendered that admittedly good-looking hardware so last century! But it only takes a minute for so last century to flip over into so cutting edge, and that's exactly what's happened with classic hi-fi. For decades regarded like an old mobile phone – irrelevant, something to be ashamed of, hide or throw away – it's time to think again about those B&O systems. Today's music players are pretty bland affairs that just keep getting smaller and smaller. But if you really love your music, isn't it time for your hi-fi to make a statement, as the focus of your room once again?

Whether you've whole-heartedly bought into the vinyl revival or just want to hook up your iPod library to something more expansive, when looking to put a hi-fi system together, vintage is definitely the way to go. And if you decide to go with vintage, there's only one name (well, two to be accurate) when it comes to top end design with performance to match. Not only has Bang & Olufsen always been at the forefront of top end electronics, it has been just as famous for its sensational styling too. So if you've got the beautiful Danish furniture, the Finnish glass and the Swedish fabrics, why wouldn't you want to complete the Scandinavian

look with a fabulous minimal long and low B&O system?

Bang & Olufsen products have always been aspirational – way beyond the pocket of the average music lover. But the great thing is that older pieces, the discarded treasures of plutocrats from the 1960s, 70s and early 80s, are freely available in large numbers and therefore extremely affordable. And these are certainly not pieces to hide away. In pride of place, they turn your favourite room into a music room at the flick of a switch. But – a word of warning – B&O pieces are addictive! Once you have one, you will want more. And as you explore what's out there, a different model in each room soon won't seem so over-the-top a dream.

The story so far...

Peter Bang and Svend Olufsen set up their business in Struer, Denmark, in 1925 as a small-scale manufacturer of robust radio sets for the home market. It was not until after the War, in the mid-60s, that the success of their Beomaster 900 (the first transistorised tabletop mains radio) propelled the company into their Golden Age. Soon B&O became synonymous with sexy design and cutting edge electronics, producing hundreds of different models of 'Beomaster' (receiver), 'Beolit' (radio), 'Beogram' (turntable/CD player), 'Beocord' (tape player), 'Beovox' (speaker), 'Beolab' (powered speaker/amplifier), 'Beovision' (TV) and headphones. It can come as no surprise to any aficionado of Scandinavian design to discover that one of the great stylists of the company



Beomaster 2400
amplifier with
Beogram 4004
turntable

Opposite: The
superb BEOGRAM
1200 finished in



started life as an architect. Between 1962 and 1979, architect/designer Henning Moldenhawer (1914-1983) was responsible for styling a number of B&O products, most notably 1964's groundbreaking Beomaster 900. Its long (75cm) and elegant design housed the cutting-edge stereo technology in a cabinet of teak or rosewood that bore the Danish Furniture Quality mark common to all the best Danish furniture of the day. Moldenhawer also styled the Beomaster 1400 and a number of B&O TVs. The 900 set the standard for early transistor radios and its popularity put B&O on the world map. Today, you can find a good second-hand one from £80 upwards (around £130 for the rosewood cabinet version). The company has always sub-con-

tracted design rather than running its own studio and one of Moldenhawer's employees, British-born David Lewis (1939-2011), later went on to design for B&O through his own company, with projects including the iconic six-CD BeoSound 9000. Early in his career, Lewis also freelanced for Jacob Jensen (born 1926), the best-known of the B&O's stylists and a Danish industrial designer of international repute. Jensen styled hundreds of B&O products from 1965 until the early 90s and many can be seen in design museums like the New York Museum of Modern Art. He created the first of B&O's designer systems in his distinctive minimal, low-profile style finished in rosewood, brushed aluminium and dark glass. **ve**

WHAT TO BUY

It's hard to choose between so many great designs but these are, to me, the standout pieces and best buys. Note that the speaker selection is endless and tailor-made to accompany different ranges but, beware, some of the early 80s ones (although in great cabinets) were good by the standards of the day but not as good as modern equivalents. They are also highly likely to require refoaming.

- **BEOGRAM 1200** (1969) Considered by many to be the most beautiful record player in the world, superbly engineered and finished in brushed aluminium and rosewood. Expect to pay £60 upwards. Beware of examples without a cartridge or stylus as replacements are hard to come by and very expensive.
- **BEOMASTER 901** (1974) Rosewood or teak finish with aluminium front face and sliding controls – £126 new in 1974, a second-hand one today will cost around £100.
- **BEOMASTER 1700** (1980) Features a striking angled glass panel with sliding track controls cased in a contrasting rosewood and brushed aluminium frame. Expect to pay £70 upwards.
- **BEOMASTER 2400** (1977) An evolution of the ground-breaking 1900, this is for me the quintessential B&O receiver – minimal, long, low, sleek and stylish – everything you would expect from B&O, finished in rosewood, glass and brushed aluminium with touch-sensitive control and an early remote control. The design handbook really went out the window with this one – a real beauty. Expect to pay £50 to £100, more if it has the Beocontrol remote (a work of art in itself). It still sounds excellent and will compete with the best hi-fi around today. Connect your iPod or MP3 player to one of the auxiliary DIN ports and off you go.
- **U70 HEADPHONES** (1978) The perfect accessory – what could be more retro looking! Expect to pay £60 upwards.
- **BEOMASTER 1000** (1965) another fine and striking design with a teak frame and angled front with a shock of polished steel with black (or white) piano key switches. You can pick one up from £60 to £100. **ve**



U70 HEADPHONES



BEOMASTER 1700



BEOMASTER 901



BEOMASTER 1000



BEOGRAM 1200 RPM CONTROL