

# TAD-D600/C2000/M2500

(£27,000/£20,000/£18,000)

Another 'world first' for *HFN*: we get our hands on some of the high-end components designed to partner TAD loudspeakers: unavailable in Europe... until now  
 Review: **John Bamford** Lab: **Paul Miller**

**T**-A who? Eagle-eyed readers may recall we've mentioned TAD high-end loudspeakers – and its recently developed electronics components – in show reports from CES during recent years. And if you're a reader of audio magazines from the US you might have seen the fabulous TAD Reference One floorstander and smaller Compact Reference stand-mount monitor gracing some American magazine front covers. But TAD Labs' products – the acronym stands for Technical Audio Devices Laboratories by the way – have not been available outside of the US and Japan until now, so you won't have seen them reviewed over here.

## A NEW VENTURE

You may know little about TAD Labs, unless you're an acoustician and architect responsible for designing control and monitoring rooms for professional recording studios. Founded in 1975, TAD Labs is the audio research and development 'skunkworks' – the Formula One racing division, if you like – of Pioneer Corporation of Japan, with independent R&D and headquarters in the Shinjuku district of Tokyo. Its products are hand-crafted and extremely rare.

Late last century TAD Laboratories made a commercial decision to develop complete 'consumer' high-end hi-fi systems for audiophiles. Enter British design engineer Andrew Jones, who famously worked with Laurie Fincham at KEF during the 1980s. Living in Los Angeles, Jones was tasked with setting up a Californian branch office of TAD Labs [see box out, p23].

TAD Labs is now making several products to partner its ultra-luxurious speakers. Hand-built to order, they boast

battleship construction with eye-watering price tags to match. We've managed to get our hands on the company's flagship D600 'disc player', a CD/SACD/DAC component sporting 24-bit/192kHz-compatible digital inputs (S/PDIF and AES/EBU) that allows its on-board DACs to be used with other digital sources. A pure analogue preamp is also coming. Previewed at CES in January in prototype form, it's dubbed the C600 and in a cost-no-object system it would drive TAD Labs's monstrous M600 monoblocks.

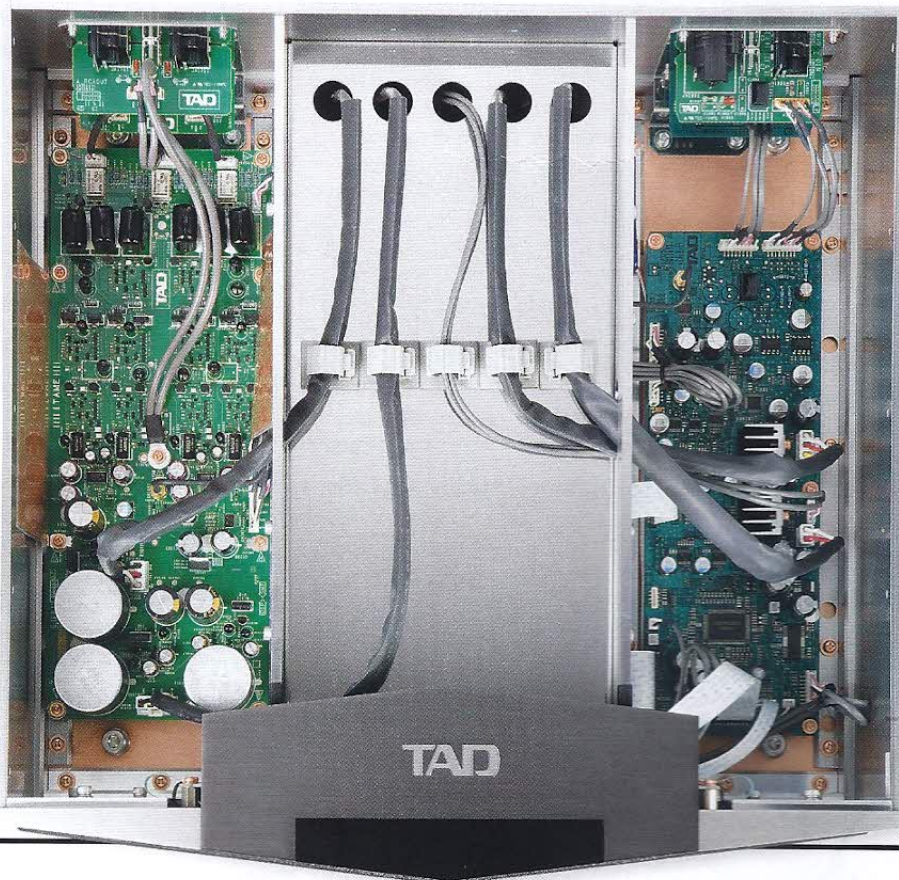
In addition to its Reference series, TAD Labs makes a slightly less costly range of components called the 'Evolution' series. Again, a working prototype of TAD Lab's first Evolution speaker, a handsome circa-

£24k floorstander, the TAD E1, was being demonstrated to trade visitors to CES in Las Vegas at the beginning of this year.

## WELCOME TO THE EVOLUTION

This review focuses on the company's C2000/M2500 pre/power combination that typically might partner the E1 loudspeaker in a stereo system. These are Evolution rather than Reference electronics – not that it's of much consequence since they are still hand-crafted, almost-go-for-broke high-end components.

As there isn't a disc player in TAD Labs' Evolution line-up, we've listened to the C2000/M2500 pre/power combo being driven by the Reference D600 disc player.



**RIGHT:** Chamber construction isolates the encapsulated disc transport mechanism from the analogue and digital circuits. Copper plating of the base can be seen below the circuit boards

