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Printed in the UK by
Premier Print, London

HIFICRITIC is a printed publication available by subscription only.

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I'm pleased – nay proud – to point out that *HIFICRITIC* has now been running for three full years.

We've managed to survive the toughest economic crisis within most living memories. It hasn't been easy, and we have had to reduce our publishing frequency from bi-monthly to quarterly (while adding eight extra feature pages, and increasing the page size). But we have survived, so we must be doing some things right.

That may be because we've got some of the best critics and writers around. This issue sees Peter Comeau's first 'Letter from Shenzhen'. Peter has tried his hand at most things in British hi-fi. He began in retail, became a reviewer, founded Heybrook and ran it for many years, joined Mission as its chief designer, then took over World Designs to indulge his enthusiasm for the vintage side – valve amps, Garrard turntables and classic speaker designs.

Then came a call from IAG, which wanted him to head up its Hi-Fi Division as Director of Acoustic Design. IAG is a Chinese company based in Shenzhen (close to Hong Kong), a Chinese operation which has accumulated a string of famous British brands, including Quad, Wharfedale, Mission, Audiolab and Castle. Such an offer would be difficult for anyone to refuse, never mind a lifelong hi-fi enthusiast like Peter.

However, this new post did involve relocating to China, which gave me the cherished opportunity to find a reputable and experienced one-time journalist who could give us some idea of what was actually going on, in the giant country that had so rapidly become the world leader in hi-fi manufacture. Hopefully he'll find time to send us the occasional dispatch between designing at least four ranges of speakers!

It's been tough even keeping to our four-issue schedule this year, thanks in part to the difficulties with the postal system. This issue ought to arrive well before Christmas, and we are attempting to drag the schedule forward a little, but it's not proving an easy task. Some of the blame for our persistent tardiness is certainly down to yours truly, and the inevitable reluctance of any freelancer to turn down any work that's offered. Furthermore, in this issue I've rather broken my own rule of concentrating on the editing role rather than getting too involved in the writing side of things. Frankly, I think I've written too much of the content this time around, but it just seemed to happen that way.

Whether or not it's a by-product of the credit crunch, getting hold of loan stock for review also seems to have become increasingly difficult lately. I started chasing up the headphones that are reviewed in this issue way back in September, while going round the Whittlebury Hall hi-fi show. A couple of pairs arrived quickly enough, but the final pair took at least five weeks to arrive, which seems an unconscionably long time, and inevitably delayed the review well beyond the 'official' copy date.

So we continue to appear later than we'd hoped, but at least we have managed to get distributed (*deo volente*) within our quarterly 'window'. The patience of our subscribers is much appreciated, and our apologies to the less patient. Hopefully the content is worth the wait.

Paul Messenger

Editor