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This issue has proved a serious shoehorn job, and has rather fewer reviews than usual. Indeed a number of items I was planning to do myself had to be held over at the last minute, so that my *Subjective Sounds* this month has turned into a 'taster' or 'preview' column, giving a brief taste of several devices there wasn't space to review properly. (Hopefully they will appear in the next issue.)

The reasons are twofold: Devialet/SAM and MQA. Both are fascinating and important new components and technologies that demand our detailed attention, so it's maybe rather unfortunate that both turned up at roughly the same time. The result might be a bit techno-heavy for some readers, but I also hope they make for an unusually interesting read.

One of the issues to make the national media recently is the question of advertising influencing editorial coverage. Peter Osborne – a fine and lucid commentator, even if one might not share his political views – recently resigned his position as political editor of The Daily Telegraph newspaper, because of what he considered undue advertiser influence on a particular story.

It's an issue that will be familiar enough to anybody who works in the media, and is a major reason why we at *HIFICRITIC* decided not to take advertising. Regrettably this also necessarily makes us significantly more costly than the competition, since advertising revenue has long been used to subsidise the cover price of most magazines. But the fact that we're now entering our ninth year of publication does perhaps emphasise the validity of our stance.

This doesn't mean that we're entirely immune from any form of political pressure, since we still rely on manufacturer and distributor cooperation in acquiring loan equipment for review etc. But it does tend to reduce the pressure by a worthwhile amount.

Besides its lack of advertising (and corresponding advertiser pressure), I believe that *HIFICRITIC* differs from the other hi-fi magazines in several respects. Perhaps the most important of these is that our editorial content includes features as well as the equipment reviews that seem to be the overwhelmingly dominant element in every one of today's hi-fi magazines.

When I joined Hi-Fi News some 40 years ago, I was originally appointed as Features Editor (subsequently promoted to Deputy Editor). In those days the equipment reviews were edited by a freelance operator working from home (Donald Aldous), and were relegated to the rear of the publication, as Editor John Crabbe considered them relatively unimportant. (He had a point, as the reviews back then weren't particularly interesting.)

However, a survey showed that the readers were actually very keen on them, so their future status became established, and both reviewers and the reviews themselves improved. I certainly wouldn't deny the importance of equipment reviews, which can often explore similar grounds as a feature. But there's clearly also a historic precedent for general articles about hi-fi that aren't necessarily linked to a specific piece of hardware, and *HIFICRITIC* will continue to include these features alongside the inevitable equipment reviews.

Paul Messenger
Editor