

on track

Keeping you on track with the developments at Grahams Hi-Fi

No. 43 Summer 2010



“One of the five best hi-fi shops in the world”

ARENA Magazine

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email newsletter

Our newsletters are published on our website as PDFs which can be downloaded. If you would prefer to receive our newsletter electronically, please email us: newsletter@grahams.co.uk with your contact details and we'll add you to our email list.

diamonds are a man's best friend

Hard enough to cut stone and grind glass, diamond is a miracle material, used in advanced industrial applications like the Large Hadron Collider at CERN. Its combination of lightness and incredible stiffness also makes it the perfect tweeter material, capable of producing high frequencies way beyond the range of human hearing. Using modern scientific processes, diamonds are grown under laboratory conditions to form the optimum tweeter dome shape.

We have been selling the range of B&W speakers for many years and the diamond tweeter was introduced into some of the models a few years ago. For 2010 the entire range has been re-vamped and the diamond tweeter is now fitted to all models from the compact 805 all the way to the 800.

It's part of the reason why 800 Series speakers have become legendary among professional recording studios and serious sound enthusiasts alike.

Could these diamonds be a man's best friend ?

All versions are also now available in a stunning piano black finish at no extra cost. Needless to say, we are delighted with the improvements in sound that have been made and we are sure many of our customers will want to listen to the new models with a view to upgrading.

The 800 Diamond range starts with the “entry” level 805 Diamond at £3,750 per pair. As the old models were very popular, we expect many people may want to upgrade them. We have therefore worked out a special introductory trade-in program running until the end of August where we will be offering an extra 15% trade in value of your old speakers. They say “seeing is believing”, or rather listening, so please speak to our sales team to arrange a demonstration.



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bowers and wilkins factory visit

A couple of weeks ago, Paul, Jude, John, Simon and David spent the day at the B&W factory in Worthing where they had a tour which included seeing the new speaker cabinet manufacturing process. Until recently the cabinets for the 800 series were all manufactured in Denmark but after B&W bought the Danish company a couple of years ago, they have now re-located the specialist fabrication equipment here, to the UK, where they have much better flexibility and control on production. In these difficult economic times it is great news that they are employing many more people at the UK facility in this area of production.

The cabinets for the 800 Diamond series are formed using a ply construction and some very interesting "bending" equipment is used to get the curvature of the cabinet. Spray painting is done using robotic devices – just like you will have seen on motor car production lines, which is mesmerising to watch.

What amazed us all was the length of time that it takes for the hand polishing and buffing of the new piano black finish, and how many hours of loving work goes into producing this quality product.

One final fact that stuck out was that whilst B&W, along with many other speaker manufacturers, have some products made in China, B&W actually make their speaker drivers here in the UK, then ship them to China to be assembled. This attention to detail helps them ensure and maintain the highest quality across the whole product range.



B&W MM1 near field active computer monitors (£399)

Hot on the heels of B&W's P5 headphones, comes another product specifically designed to extract as much audiophile quality sound possible from a pair of incredibly compact speakers. Measuring just 170mm high x 100mm wide x 100mm deep each speaker contains separate treble & bass units, utilising much of the Nautilus technology. They have been voiced to work best close to the listener, and offer levels of clarity & bass weight quite unbelievable from such a diminutive package.

Of special interest is the speaker's ability to accept a digital USB feed from your computer, which is then decoded by the speaker's on board digital to analogue circuitry – so essentially the speaker acts as a high quality "sound card". This digital quality can also be listened to on headphones via the headphone socket on the loudspeaker.

These are available in-shop or on-line via our web site www.grahams.co.uk/shop



B&W P5 headphones (£249)

B&W's first foray into the headphone market can only be described as another triumph for the Worthing based company.

With a rapidly increasing market awareness of the iPod's true potential for music through high resolution downloads etc, B&W have taken this opportunity to look afresh at the needs of a no compromise 'portable' headphone. In a nutshell, they have created a lightweight (195gms), 'closed back' design to cut out a large quantity of external noise. This also has the advantage of cutting the amount of noise leaking out of the headphones down to a minimum.

Created with the iPod in mind B&W also supply as standard a lead that is ready to use with the iPhone, offering a built-in microphone and some control, such as volume, next track and call answering.

Everything about the P5 breathes B&W's attention to detail. Extremely comfortable to wear over long periods, already a number of our staff are using them as a means of enjoying high quality music playback on the move.

These are available in-shop or on-line via our web site www.grahams.co.uk/shop



naim unitiserve and unitiqute

Following the success of the Naim HDX and the NaimUniti, Naim are bringing out the UnitiServe and UnitiQute.

UnitiServe

The UnitiServe is a compact (Hi-Cap size), slot-loading, CD ripping, hard disk music player and server, based on the technology of the multi-award winning Naim HDX. It takes the basics of the HDX with a 1TB hard drive, Naim bit-perfect ripping and UPnP™ server. It does not contain a touch screen, but can be controlled by an iPhone/iTouch/iPad running a dedicated Naim app, an external monitor, or a computer via a web browser or the Naim Desktop Client application.

It has a digital output only, so it can replay ripped CDs into a digital input-equipped amplifier, such as the SuperNait, or a separate digital to analogue converter like Naim's DAC. In addition the UnitiServe can operate as a server to stream audio to any UPnP™ playback device over a home network, such as the NaimUniti or UnitiQute, to create a simple, but high quality multi-room system. The UnitiServe can also be used in a NaimNet system.

A variant of the UnitiServe – the UnitiServe-SSD (solid state drive, with no moving parts) will also be available. The UnitiServe-SSD has no internal hard disk storage and is intended for use in the home network where the ripped data is stored exclusively on NAS drives.

The UnitiServe will be available in July. The standard UnitiServe, with the 1TB internal storage, costs £2,000.00, and the UnitiServe-SSD costs £2,250.00. The control app, which is the same one as for the HDX, is already available from the iTunes app store, and costs £25 to download.

UnitiQute

The extremely popular, multi-award winning NaimUniti will have a new sibling, the UnitiQute. Many people requested a NaimUniti without the internal CD player, and at a lower price, and so Naim have listened, and delivered. The UnitiQute is Hi-Cap size (half size like a shoebox), and includes a pre-amplifier with two analogue inputs, five digital inputs, and a power amplifier. It also includes DAB/FM and Internet radio, as well as an Apple Authenticated USB socket, which can be used to connect an iPod digitally, i.e. bypassing the iPod's own DAC. The same USB socket can be used to play music files in most formats directly from a memory stick. Finally, an Ethernet socket and integrated Wi-Fi means that the UnitiQute can stream music from a UPnP server, such as the Naim HDX or UnitiServe, or a suitable NAS drive.

The UnitiQute will be available in July priced at £1,350. The app to control the NaimUniti and the UnitiQute via the iPhone, iTouch or iPad is expected to be available from the iTunes app store at the same time.

A few updates...

The Naim HDX now has an updated PCI card which improves the sound quality. By arrangement existing HDX owners can have their models upgraded at Grahams for £250. All new HDX and UnitiServe models will include the new card.

Finally, there are a number of firmware updates available for the Uniti and HDX servers. Please contact us for more details.



iPad

At the beginning of June Apple launched the new iPad. This device offers a larger screen with approximately 5 times the resolution of its smaller brothers, the iTouch and iPhone.

The good news is that most of our control systems which have applications written for the iPhone will run happily on the larger iPad, but more importantly, most are being rewritten to make full use of the larger display allowing, clearer graphics, more information and easier use.

The relatively low cost of the iPad allows a wider range of our customers to have access to pretty cool and sophisticated control of their entertainment, which until now, due to the high cost, was often outside many people's reach.

We can control the following devices on the iPad: Linn DS, Crestron, Lutron, Naim HDX and UnitiServe, Kaleidescape, Sooloos, NaimNet, Netstreams and more to come..

Why not pop in and take a look..



kaleidescape

Kaleidescape have just launched their next generation Movie Players. The M500 and M300 player are based on Kaleidescape's M-Class architecture, a powerful platform for the onscreen user interface and for playing Blu-ray content. The new on-screen user interface has been improved considerably over the earlier players, providing faster access with much sharper and clearer graphics.

The exclusive Kaleidescape Movie Guide provides cover art, synopses, and details like actors, directors, genres and ratings. Songs on concert films are indexed (just as if they were audio cds) for easy access. Movies start instantly, without advertisements, trailers or menus. The M500 Player also copies your Blu-ray Discs, DVDs and CDs onto your Kaleidescape server.

An M500 Player can play directly from a Blu-ray Disc, DVD or CD, or from the copy stored on your server. For Blu-ray, playback must be enabled by the presence of the physical disc in one of your M500 Players.

The M300 player is half the size and without disc drive.

Both players are compatible with the range of Kaleidescape media servers; most of the servers now utilise 2TB drives which has doubled the previous capacity.

As all of these systems are bespoke in their configuration, please contact us for pricing details. There is also a superb trade-in program for existing customers who may wish to upgrade their players.



meridian 861 version 6

Since its introduction in 1998, the Meridian 861 Reference Digital Surround Controller has consistently offered one of the industry's highest standards in surround processing and system control.

The 861's modular architecture allows for wide flexibility so that as technology standards advance and new features are developed, existing 861s can be upgraded – adding new processing features and connectivity; a service that maintains the value of the customer's original investment.

Each 861 includes a highly sophisticated power supply and a backplane with slots for both digital and analogue audio cards. The slots can be populated with a selection of available 800 Series cards, the total number depending on the owner's specific requirements.

This sixth version of 861 – the 861 V6 Reference Digital Surround Controller – incorporates SpeakerLink (Cat 5) output connectivity for up to eight channels of Meridian DSP Loudspeakers with a single RJ45(Cat5) cable and an eight-channel MMHR (Meridian Multichannel High Resolution) input as standard for High resolution sources such as Blu-ray.

The optional ID40 Sooloos Card delivers the highest possible playback quality from a Meridian Sooloos Digital Media Storage System.

The 861 V6 is available as a table-top box, or in a rack-mountable version with or without cover. It is supplied finished in Graphite, Silver or Black; the full range of Meridian Select colour options is also available.

jvc hd 990

In our last newsletter we mentioned the imminent arrival of the top of the range JVC HD-990 projector with an estimated price of £10,000. The good news is that we have now had this in and the performance is everything we had hoped for, although the price is 20% less at £7995. We now have three JVC D-ILA home theatre models in our range, all with extremely high native contrast ratios: the HD550 at 30000:1, the HD950 at 50000:1, and the HD990 at 70000:1. What these numbers mean is that the projectors can produce extremely dark black levels with natural images and superior picture quality.

In addition to featuring advanced colour calibration, THX mode and certification, the HD950 and HD990 also offer ISF (Imaging Science Foundation) calibration, which allows trained installers to professionally calibrate the projector to your room and type of screens. This is important because it takes into account the light levels and finishes in the room which will have to be factored in when setting up a projector to give the best image.

Just like the previous models, these units have a wide range of mounting options, which makes them very flexible without any compromises. All models we supply and install are covered by an extended three year warranty (excluding lamps).



new products



grahams 3d open evening

We have arranged an open day on Thursday 29th July from 3 - 8pm where we will be demonstrating the new Panasonic 3d plasma display with 3D capability. Our demonstration will allow you to see for yourself some of the possibilities, and we will have experts on hand to talk to you about the technical aspects in as much detail as you would like.

Please contact sue@grahams.co.uk or call us on 0207 226 5500 if you would like tickets.

3d, or not 3d, that is the question

The current "latest" in the world of consumer electronics is 3D providing a "new" viewing experience. In fact, 3D films have existed in some form since the late 19th century but the basic principle still remains today. An image is derived from a stereoscopic video camera which records images as seen from two perspectives. This information then requires some form of video storage, transmission and then special processing in the television set or video projector to recreate the effect.

Currently for 3D to work effectively you still need to wear special glasses and we are some years away before these can be dispensed with. There are two basic types of glasses available. Passive polarising glasses are cheap and often used in the cinema, but they reduce light levels and are not very bright. More sophisticated glasses use an active shutter system which work well with projectors and plasma screens, though not quite so well with LCD TVs. These active devices are battery operated and also require a sensor in the room above the TV or screen to synchronise the shutters.

3D films featured in the 1950s in the USA and later in the 80s and 90s with high-end movie theatres such as IMAX helping increase awareness. The most successful movie in 3D to date is the film Avatar, which was released in December 2009.

Whilst the principles of 3D have been around for well over 100 years, needless to say the latest solutions offer a number of different standards (just to confuse the consumer) and it is still very early days yet for 3D. Sky are currently transmitting test material to the home, along with some live sporting events through external venues. Blu-ray discs are now starting to come to market, which will deal with the 3D images.

Whilst there are a number of new sets coming on the market, we would still tread slightly cautiously as there is most certainly going to be some "ironing-out" of technical and compatibility issues over the next few months. Certainly by the end of the year, many of these issues will become either resolved or apparent.

The jury is out as to whether 3D will really catch on, but one thing is certain, it will require different camera techniques and the film industry will have to learn how to use them.

*Totally arresting
experience*



Love your
Linn Hi-Fi



'love your linn hi-fi' summer promotion

Until Tuesday, 17th August 2010 Linn are running a 'Love your Linn Hi-Fi' summer promotion. With the purchase of any new Majik, Akurate or Klimax product you will qualify for a free upgrade to your existing system. You can choose either a Dynamik or Aktiv upgrade. Please ask us for more details.

arcam blu-ray

The much anticipated Arcam Blu-ray player should be shipping over the next few weeks. This product has been eagerly awaited and is to be the first Blu-ray player to be made by a high-end specialist manufacturer. We are being told the player will be fully upgradeable to 3D, unlike most standard Blu-ray players, and the target price will be around £1000. We can't wait...



epos encore 50

In an age where sleek lines have been at the top of any designers wish list, Epos have produced, after 3 years of research, a loudspeaker that in their own words is tall, imposing but elegant. It stands 1.2 mtrs high, with a large plinth to support & stabilize its substantial 50kg weight.

The cabinet is a composite of birch ply (a favourite of the old BBC designs) and MDF. This offers the tonal benefits of the former with the stiffness of the latter. In fact one of the qualities that most amazed us, straight from the box, was the quality & controlled nature of the speakers bass performance.

It uses 2 x 220mm bass units, each in their own sealed enclosures, above which are a 158mm midrange and aluminium domed tweeter, also allocated their own cavities.

The crossover has been specified with the finest level of passive components, which also offers output adjustments for the tweeter & midrange units for fine tuning in room. The speakers cost £5,000 per pair.



arcam solo neo

The Solo Neo (£1,350) is Arcam's new offering in the arena of single box hi-fi. As well as the CD player and FM/DAB radio they have now added a digital streamer giving you access to the music stored on your network. This can be accessed wired or wirelessly and covers a wide range of file formats so you won't be disappointed. Thousands of Internet Radio stations are also available from around the world so you can listen to what's happening at the World Cup from any country's perspective!

Arcam have also upgraded the sound performance of the Solo Neo and it still has all of the connections allowing it to connect to a more powerful amplifier as a suitable upgrade or add Arcam's own irDock for connecting and controlling your iPod or iTouch. A USB input has been added to allow the use of memory sticks as well. An app for the iTouch will soon be available for control of the digital music streaming and Internet Radio.

We were impressed with the improvement over the old Solo Music and whether the Neo is driving Arcam's own Muso speakers or a larger pair we think you will be too.

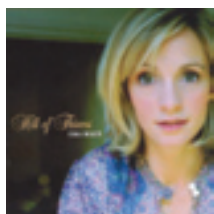
meridian 808.3 cd player

The 808 reference CD player was first introduced in 2004 to immediate acclaim. Meridian hailed it as the best CD player they had ever made. But since then, developments in technology and innovations conceived by Meridian have made it possible to make it even better. Now, Meridian introduces the third-generation 808 – the 808.3. It was specifically developed to render the very best sound from Compact Disc and network audio. Meridian's 808.3 is the latest in a series of optical disc players that use a new CD-ROM drive for reading. This drive allows multiple passes to be made, ensuring that the correct data is recovered from the disc and improving Compact Disc's error-correction a hundred fold. It also allows complete buffering of the recovered data. To ensure the lowest possible jitter, the 808.3 incorporates an entirely new clocking regime. By the time the data is passed to the DACs or the digital outputs, the jitter is incredibly low – in fact the 808.3 has the lowest jitter measured on a CD player.

You can connect the 808.3 directly to two of Meridian's digital active loudspeakers using Ethernet cables, eliminating the need for a preamp, or it can be used with separate amplifiers. Using an optional interface card, you can connect to the Meridian-Sooloos music server in order to route music from the server directly into the 808.3. Playback is from CDs, music stored on the server, or tunes from the online Rhapsody service sourced through the server. We now have it on demonstration and it is available in Graphite, Silver, Piano-Lacquer Black and the complete range of Meridian Select colours.



grahams recommended music



1. Cara Dillon Hill of Thieves

This is her fourth album as a solo artist, and the first on her own record label, Charcoal Records. It is an album of traditional songs, arranged by Dillon, and her husband Sam Lakeman, who plays piano and guitar and also produced and recorded the album. His brothers, Seth and Sean also guest. The focus is on Dillon's beautiful, plaintive voice, which brings the most out of the stories in the songs. Hill of Thieves won album of the year in the 2010 BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards.

CD £13.00



2. Jeff Beck Performing This Week...Live at Ronnie Scott's

This album was recorded during a five-night six-set residency at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in Soho in late 2007. The legendary guitarist, Jeff Beck is at his best playing live, and here, in an intimate setting, has a great band consisting of drummer Vinnie Colauita, jazz keyboardist Jason Rebello, and a young, female bass player, Tal Wilkenfeld. On one of the nights Jeff Beck is joined by the guitarist he replaced in The Yardbirds, in 1965, Eric Clapton, as can be seen on the DVD.

2 X LPs 180gm £30.00

CD £13.00 DVD £13.00

BLU-RAY £15.00



3. Mumford and Sons Sigh No More

Mumford and Sons is not the name of a small family business, but is instead a folk/rock group, who formed in late 2007, consisting of four young men from West London, led by singer/guitarist Marcus Mumford. Before then the friends had backed other artists, including Laura Marling. The instruments they play are acoustic guitar, upright bass, banjo and keyboards. This, their debut album, was produced by Markus Dravs of Arcade Fire and Bjork fame, and mastered by Bob Ludwig.

CD £12.00 LP(ltd) £25.00



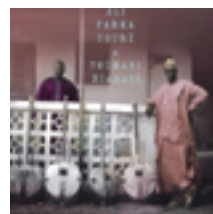
4. Pink Martini Splendor in the Grass

Pink Martini's fourth album contains the same eclectic mix as the previous three. There are nine original songs, and four covers, and they are sung in English, Neapolitan, Italian, French and Spanish. The bandleader and pianist, Thomas Lauderdale, sums up the feel of the CD when he said "If the United Nations had a house band in 1962, then hopefully we'd be that band". The special limited edition CD contains a bonus DVD with ten tracks from a 2006 concert.

CD £13.00

CD + DVD(ltd) £15.00

2 X LPs(ltd) 180gm £25.00



5. Ali Farka Toure & Toumani Diabate Ali and Toumani

This is the second, and final, collaboration between the guitarist and kora player from Mali, following 'In The Heart Of The Moon', which won a Grammy in 2005. Nick Gold and Jerry Boys managed to record them over three afternoons at the Livingston Studios, London in mid-2005, less than a year before Ali Farka Toure died. Buena Vista's Orlando "Cachaïto" Lopez guests on double bass. Diabate describes the new album as "a wiser album, a softer album, an acoustic album that we could savour".

CD £13.00

2 x LPs 180gm £25.00



6. Claire Martin A Modern Art

Clare Martin, Britain's leading jazz singer and presenter of BBC Radio 3's 'Jazz Line Up', won Best Vocalist at the British Jazz Awards 2009. This album, recorded the same year, features Laurence Cottle bass, Nigel Hitchcock alto sax, Mark Nightingale trombone, Philip Robson guitar, and Gareth Williams piano. Virtually all the songs, including two self-penned tunes, are written by contemporary artists. Claire Martin says "jazz is a thoroughly modern art form and this is my version".

CD(Hybrid SACD) £12.00

Flac 16bit download at

Grahams £9.00

Flac 24bit download at
Grahams £16.00

This selection of music is available for collection or by mail order. Contact us by phone, e-mail, fax or post. Our contact details are on the front page of the newsletter. Postage & packing for 1 CD is £1.00 and for up to 4 CDs is £3.00. 1 LP is £3.00 and there is a maximum charge of £5.00. There is a 10% discount and free postage for the purchase of all six recordings.



loewe individual sl

Loewe have recently released the brand new Slim Line Individual. This has Loewe's new LED backlit technology to make the screen much thinner, meaning that the screen goes from 11.5cm to only 6cm. It also benefits from a 400Hz screen refresh rate, 4 times as fast as the old Individual so that all movement on the screen is as smooth as possible.

There are still two models in the range, the Selection and the Compose. Neither of these now come with a speaker, so you can add it to an existing hi-fi setup or you can simply use one of the multitude of speaker options from Loewe themselves, from high quality electrostatic speakers to an add-on stereo speaker. The Selection has a High Gloss bezel around the screen, both of which are plastic, whereas the Compose has a metal surround and an anti-reflective glass panel for added clarity and a higher quality look.

Loewe have also expanded their range of options for the Individual. Although there are now only 3 options for the colour of the main body of the screen (Black, Silver and High Gloss White) you have 14 different colour and finish options for the sides of the sets with even the possibility of a colour matching service.

The stands and mounts options closely mimic the previous Individual models with the only addition being the new Flexi wall-mount which allows you to pull out and swivel the TV. Loewe have, however, reintroduced the option of furniture. These beautiful cabinets allow you to hide your equipment, media and speakers so that the whole system can be fully integrated and look flawless.

GRAHAMS

“One of the five best hi-fi shops in the world”

ARENA Magazine

new website

Grahams was the first hi-fi retailer, and probably one of the first retailers in the UK, to have a website when we first went on line in 1995. Fifteen years later, in what seems like a lifetime of technology, we are very excited to have had a major re-vamp of our website and the new Grahams 2010 website should be up and running by the time you receive this newsletter. We have been using a new design program which has allowed us to make the new website more relevant, easy to use and makes Grahams more accessible to all.

Our Grahams web shop concentrates on products that are perfect for on-line purchasing, items that are simple to set-up and require little technical know-how to get the best from them. The rest of the website is a great on-line shop front for all the products and services that we can provide.

The new website can be found at www.grahams.co.uk... Take a look around!



eva graham 1938- 2009

It is with much sadness that we have to write about the passing on of Eva Graham just before Christmas last year. Eva was Tony's wife of more than 50 years, and mother of Suzanne, David and Peter.

Eva finally lost her battle with cancer and passed away peacefully on Monday 21st December 2009 at the young age of 71. The funeral took place at the Golders Green Crematorium in Hoop Lane, London on

Thursday 24th December 2009. Eva worked for the family business over the years, and more recently, for 20 years as a volunteer at the North London Hospice, and it was ironic that she was diagnosed with cancer only a few weeks after

retiring. During this battle which lasted about two years, Tony worked tirelessly caring for her, shopping, cleaning, cooking and generally running the house.

It was a hard decision for Eva to agree to spend her last days at the hospice, because of all the people she knew there, but she was convinced that she could not be in a better place, where people knew and loved her, and this was where she passed away peacefully surrounded by her family and friends.

Eva and Tony Graham on their wedding day in 1957



hills in heels

Touched by the Eva's death and the death of two close friends in 2009, a family friend is raising money for Macmillan Cancer Support by climbing Snowden in Heels, a crazy idea but it's all for a very good cause. If you are able make a donation to this worthy charity, please read the full story at www.justgiving.com/Hills-in-heels

Macmillan Cancer Support improves the lives of people affected by cancer. They provide practical, medical, emotional and financial support and push for better cancer care. One in three of us will get cancer. Two million of us are living with it. We are all affected by cancer. We can all help.

the what?

The What? present Roll'n'Rock Cabaret: a free monthly event combining music and comedy.

Roll'n'Rock Cabaret plays host to hand-picked London based bands and top stand-up comedians from around the globe. It is hosted by a larger than life compère at The World's End, located right next to Finsbury Park tube.

Alex, Grahams Engineer and drummer of 3 piece neon rock band The What?, has landed a residency with the exciting new event and they will be performing there one Saturday of every month.

For more info on The What? check out their spanking new updated website: www.thewhatmusic.com. Search to The What? on iTunes, Napster, Rhapsody, Last.fm and other streaming sites. See the main band website for direct web links to these services

next roll'n'rock cabaret events are:

July 17th
August 14th
September 11th
October 9th
November 13th