



EQUIPMENT REVIEW

Lyngdorf CD-1

by Alan Sircom

With a number of high profile projects, such as the Steinway Lyngdorf range, the Millennium digital amplifier and the clever Room Perfect DSP-based equalisation system, you could be forgiven for overlooking the Lyngdorf CD-1 CD player. But, cast any ideas of 'range filler' from your mind; in the topsy-turvy audiophile landscape, the CD-1 is perhaps the most important component in the Lyngdorf range.

We're finding the number of products that use a real audio CD tray becoming increasingly rare, but the CD-1 eschews CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drives in favour of a proper Philips CD-Audio mechanism. The DAC is a Wolfson WM8470 converter chip, which is designed to work in balanced mode. As a consequence, the rear panel sports XLR and phono analogue outputs. There are also transformer-coupled S/PDIF coaxial, Toslink optical, AES/EBU XLR digital connections and a pair of RS232 slots for connection to PC or remote systems. You can switch between 115v and 230v at the mains socket.

One of the smartest aspects of the player is its use of what Lyngdorf calls ICC (Intersample Clipping Correction). The resampling process reduces the gain at the DAC, then the low-pass filters reshape clipped samples back to something resembling the original shape. The result is less brash sounding modern discs (with their pushed to the max loudness causing clipping) at the expense of a couple of decibels in dynamic range at the DAC output. This of course doesn't count at the standard 16bit, 44.1kHz, because there's no sample rate conversion deployed, but works at the default 96kHz and the optional 48kHz or 192kHz (all at 24 bit precision).

The sample rates are all controllable from the menu, accessed via the front panel or the remote. Other options from the menu include display level, repeat and random track controls, some Comms control (for talking to PCs), disabling the infra-red remote (useful for custom installers), switching off the analogue section and analogue gain adjustment. This gives a handy range from -12dB to 0dB in 0.5dB steps and means level matching between the CD-1 and other products is relatively easy. ▶

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▶ Lyngdorf has taken a leaf out of its own book, building the player as if it were an amplifier. Heavy build on solid feet, side heatsinks (a trifle redundant, as the player doesn't run hot) and sporting Holmgren toroidal transformers and large power filters all make for a rigid and very OTT build.

I don't know how much run-in the player needs though; the well-used box, the finger marks on the remote and power button and the thin layer of dust it came with makes me think our sample is the demonstrator. Nevertheless, the upside here is this is a fine example of how well the product works after a lot of use, and it works well. The remote is one common to products like Arcam and Linn and the front panel – with nine buttons and a two-deck green display – is easy to operate.

Operationally, there's nothing out of the ordinary at all with the Lyngdorf. It's superbly well built and if there's one criticism of the functionality, it reflects that solid build; the CD tray reacts fast and positively. So fast in fact that the disc can sometimes jump out of the tray and cause a misread. The onus is on the person loading the CD being very careful when centring the disc on the tray.

Another observation is the player seems mains sensitive. UK mains can pitch up to as much as 255v, which can be tough on a 230v input, and although there is a seriously good mains filter in place, a good mains feed helps the matter too. On the other hand, an extra mains filter or conditioner in the chain does nothing for (or, in fairness, against) the CD-1.

From the start, it was clear this is something fighting way beyond its weight class. Three 'S' words appear again and again on the note pad; 'spacious', 'subtle' and 'silent'. The sound is expansive and possessed of the sort of big-scale imagery you'd not normally expect from a player at this price. There's a palpable sense of depth and even height to the sound here, as well as width as good as the speakers can provide.

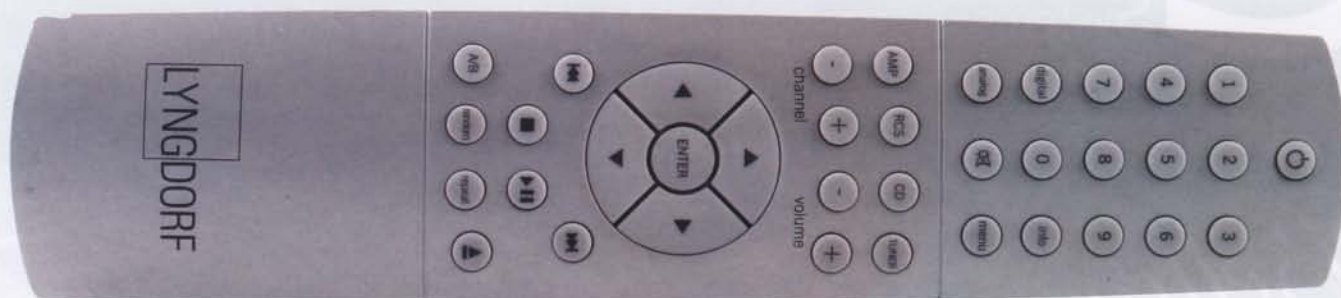
Then, there's the subtlety factor, which relates to the silence bit. The player is extremely good at retrieving those low-level details that mark out the best machines, rising out of a silent background that shouldn't be rare in digital, but is surprisingly hard to come by. This becomes apparent when listening to the alternatives, which seem to have a higher digital noise floor than the CD-1. This is not something that's immediately apparent, especially on rock programme, but playing John Rutter's *Requiem* or D'Anglebert's *Harpichord Suites* clearly demonstrated how important that silence and subtlety really is.

This last could have been made to show off what the Lyngdorf does best. A recent Naxos release, with Elizabeth Farr on Harpsichord and Lute-

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Harpichord, this excellent recording is both remarkably detailed and recorded in a natural environment, with a lot of spaces between *pizzicato* notes, and occasional sustain. The precision of the presentation moves it out of mere ornamentation and a series of trills and into a series of suites worthy of the Sun King. The music had all the space needed (both spatially and temporally) to come to life, without blurring or blunting the performance.

Don't think that this means the CD-1 fails at delivering the rock goods of the rock gods. It's powerful, dynamic and exciting sounding, too, nailing the country blues wailings of the late Roy Buchanan's eponymous album perfectly, cleverly balancing the bright Telecaster tones without squashing the life out of the music. Also, in some respects, the Lyngdorf's ICC makes this better than almost every player with modern rock discs. Take something really compromised by the Loudness War – *Black Holes and Revelations* by Muse, for example – and the CD-1 will make this disc sound better than any player irrespective of price, because it pulls it back from overload. It still sounds loud and compressed, but the music ▶



► stops shouting at you. Depending on what flavour your CD collection takes, this could be a deal-maker for many listeners.

Nevertheless, some have criticised the CD-1 for being unexciting sounding, and this complaint is not wholly groundless. But it needs setting in context. If you place the Lyngdorf in a system where it's the most expensive product (the classic top-down setting so beloved by 'flat earthers'), the 48kHz setting works out best, but you will find more exciting-sounding players from the likes of Marantz and Naim at the price. So the criticism is not wrong.

Except that the criticism *is* wrong. Put this into a system that is looking upwards, possibly where the CD-1 is not the most expensive component in the system, and a very different result quickly proves out. And once again, the settings dictate the performance, but not in the way you might expect. In most cases, 44.1kHz and 46kHz begins to look less exciting, but 96kHz becomes the default choice for those who want an Esoteric and the 192kHz setting is like a set of training wheels for a Wadia. Like most people, it seems, I preferred the 96kHz setting, although you can go quickly crazy trying to work out the idea setting on each disc if you want.

The adaptability, the 'training wheels' comment and the relatively low price for a high-end player might make you think the player is merely a placeholder for a better device. Wrong! The Lyngdorf is in no-way compromised, or leaves you waiting for the next upgrade. In fact, it's the sort of player you could put into a system costing £10,000 and still have it in place if you turned that into a system costing £50,000 or more. Think of it as an adaptable product that will happily see you through the next decade of CD play, no matter how high-end your system becomes. Yes, you will hear better sounds from a true top-line player, especially when playing beautifully recorded discs, but the CD-1 never shows its hand and will never sound like it's outclassed.

The Lyngdorf CD-1 is true high-end player without the high-end price or the prima donna sensibilities. Better still, that Intersample Clipping Correction makes 'Wild Orchid' by the White Stripes sound fan-bloody-tastic, and it's the first player that makes me want to turn 'Knights of Cydonia' by Muse 'up' instead of 'down'. That it does this without compromising more audiophile recordings in the process might just make it one of the best players money can buy, irrespective of price. +



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Type: CD Audio player

Compatible disc types: CD-DA, CD-R

Analogue Outputs: RCA phono single-ended, XLR balanced

Digital Outputs: AES/EBU, S/PDIF coaxial, Toslink

0db analog output level: 3.8 Vrms

Selectable sample rates: 44.1kHz (16-bit), 48/96/192kHz (24-bit)

Frequency response: 20Hz-20kHz (± 0.02 dB)

Balanced analog output impedance: 50 ohms

THD+N, A-weighted: 0.00018%

Crosstalk: -114 dB

S/N ratio: 115 dB

Dynamic Range: 100 dB

Power Consumption: 2.5W (standby), 20W (operating)

Finishes: Black, Silver

Dimensions (WxHxD): 450x100x357mm

Weight: 6.9kg

Price: £1,795

Manufacturer:

Lyngdorf

URL: www.lyngdorf.com

Distributed by:

Gecko

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