

HIFI-STARs

Technik

Musik

Lebensart

ISSN 1867-5166

Ausgabe 26
March 2015
May 2015



CEC CD Player and USB Sound System CD 5

Analogue Digitalist

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Review from HIFI STARS - 2015

Deutschland € 11 • Österreich € 12,30
Luxemburg € 13,00 • Schweiz sfr 22,50

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CEC Belt Drive CD Player and USB Sound System CD 5

Analogue Digitalist

Since the invention of the CD at the start of the 1980's, ambitious audiophiles have asked the question "What's better"? A question which couldn't be answered definitively until now. The analogue sound just has that special something you somehow can't describe – but everybody knows what it is. It's nothing new to say that digitally, we can now listen at an extremely high level, but we must ask the question "does the world of hifi need a new CD player? The answer is, firstly, yes, and secondly, we need one like the CEC CD5! in terms of features, connectivity and operation.

Special features

In 1991, CEC launched the first belt driven CD drive worldwide as their own design. Belt drive in a CD player? But of course! The CEC patented idea behind this makes perfect sense, as in all earlier

well-known CD players and drives the spindle motor is located under the CD turntable, with the motor spindle in the centre of the turntable. This is known as a Direct CD Drive System. However stable and precise revolution demands a high torque force, which inevitably leads to vibration and electro-magnetic interference. In CEC belt driven CD players, the spindle motor is separated from the centre spindle, which eliminates vibrations and electro-magnetic interference. A really robust CD stabiliser weighing in at a solid 330g increases the inertia of the turntable and its mass makes the CD's spin in a regular, stable manner. The lower torque and greater distance between the motor and the centre spindle (turntable) provides perfect conditions for noise-free reproduction of music, reminiscent of an analogue drive. The word about the musical cohesion, the rich detail and emotionally



The new CEC CD 5 | USB Sound System. No other CD Drive has sounded so analogue.

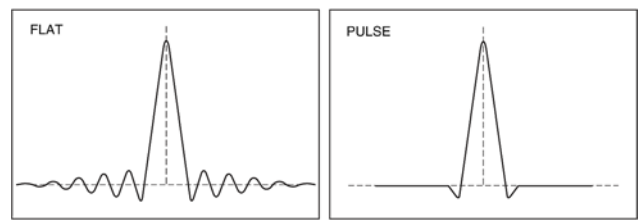


Front View of CEC CD Player and USB Sound System CD 5

gripping “analogue-like” sound got out very quickly. No other CD drive has sounded so analogue to this day. CEC continue to develop and improve on this concept all the time. Currently, the new CD 5 is being equipped with up to date DAC technology from ESS and can accommodate various connections on the back (including USB). This means high resolution music files can be played with a PC up to 32 bit/384 kHz PCM and 128/5.6 MHz DSD.

The CD 5 has independent, directly controllable digital/analogue DA converter technology and connectors on the back. Digital / analogue conversion in the CD5 is carried out by the latest generation of ESS Hyper-Stream-DAC-Chip ES9018K2M, which is compatible with signals up to 32bit/384kHz. Signals fed by the chip are also passed through a symmetrical switch. This guarantees dynamic, flawless reproduction of your music. The CD 5 boasts two different digital filters: “FLAT” – a standard filter with a linear frequency response of up to 20 kHz and “PULSE” – a noise-free pulse optimised filter and a softer attenuation under 20 kHz. You can switch from FLAT to PULSE mode using the DF

button on the remote control. The FLAT filter is the standard filter in digital audio equipment. Frequency response is nigh on ideal up to 20kHz, however a steep-sided filter of this kind causes a “ringing“ in the time domain. Some components of the energy of the impulse are in fact spread over the time domain (as vibrations to and fro around the impulse). The PULSE filter avoids this problem in the time domain and thus displays excellent impulse behaviour. However, the frequency response displays an earlier, more gentle roll off at higher frequencies.



At 44.1 kHz sampling frequency, roll off is 2dB at 20kHz. At higher sampling frequencies, this roll off is no longer relevant, the PULSE filter is always first choice in this case. At 44.1 and 49kHz, the overall result depends on the whole hifi system and personal preference. During the test...



Rear View of CEC CD Player and USB Sound System CD 5



CEC's new standard of the highly recommended CD Belt Drive System enables user replacement of Belt.

I was perfectly happy with the basic FLAT setting. The SPDIF input is compatible with coaxial and TOSLINK connectors up to 24bit/192 kHz. The USB input can connect to a PC or MAC up to PCM 32 bit/384 kHz with DoP reproduction at DSD 128/5.6 MHz. You have to install a particular driver before using the CD 5 with a windows PC. Foobar2000, the ASIO driver should be installed on a windows PC, and of course it should be set for playback of DSD files – typical Windows. These programs are available as freeware on the internet. Typically, the two analogue connections are on hand as conventional cinch and XLR outputs for symmetrical symmetry signal transfer. The two digital outputs are available in coaxial and Toslink format.

Appearance

On the front, the large VFD display shows input status, the digital filter setting and the input sampling frequency. An operationally independent FL display shows the status of CD performance. The display can be dimmed in three stages. One practical touch – for ease of use, the (6.3mm) Headphone

socket is in the front of the unit, right beside the corresponding volume control. The 43.5 x 33.5 x 10.9cm (WxDxH) housing size and surfaces create a very refined effect – CEC have also gone to town externally. The net result is a device which weighs in at a good nine kilos. The dark acrylic glass screen suits it perfectly, and the soft “click” when you close it gives you an audible signal that it is ready for operation.

Listening material

There are a few particularly well produced silver disks in my CD collection. Without any doubt, the 1993 Chesky Records production is one of these. With “The Collection” (PJD 1000) the brothers Norman and David Chesky have produced a milestone in recording technology since the foundation of their own recording label on 1988, which is still renowned for its excellent sound engineering to this day, due to combination of analogue and digital technology. Traditionally, I start with track 2 – and I'm hooked from the very first notes. In “Caribbean Sunrise”, I'm presented with sounds performed in a laid-back way, with really striking purity.

Of course, it's down to the perfect recording, but also the impressive playback ability of the CEC CD player, which is as solid as a rock. Maybe I'm laying it on a bit too heavily...? It's fair to say my sensitivity to music has had to be honed over the years, and the sound quality I can hear in this CD player is, quite simply, extremely impressive. I have to make that absolutely clear at this point. Track 3 with Sara K is one example. Before she moved to a German label, she was under contract with Chesky Records. The engaging saxophone in this piece has a seldom heard quality in the room – with complete peacefulness in the presentation.

The CEC CD 5 really plays its trump card with this kind of musical reproduction. Steel strings on a guitar accompanied by a tender female voice? That's Track 5 Bada Assad. Here too, it becomes completely apparent just how supremely the CEC CD player can reproduce sound from the recording medium in question. Spatial information and tonal nuance are depicted perfectly understandably on track 12 from Westminster Choir with "Oh Magnum Mysterium". Now, I freely admit that it's not to everyone's taste, but I do believe it works really well, particularly in this performance. There's just so much air in motion – fantastic! Just to do things properly, at this point I must add that the CEC CD 5 was able to show off its audio talent via the Lansche-Audio 5.1. Changing the music on this CD brought "Samba De Orfeo" to me next. I lean back relaxed, but already looking forward to the performances. "What does it cost" I hear myself asking...Is a future classic playing here? That could well be so! In any case, the CEC 5 is worth every penny. Not something you can really say about all hifi equipment these days. On "My Blue Heaven" by John Pizzarelli the volume control on the pre-amplifier moves to the right, the voice rises, as the wind sections are presented to us, laid-back and perfect, as if one to one.



In a nutshell

Yes, the HiFi world needs new products like the CEC CD5! The Musical playback ability on display offers a sensational relationship to price. There has seldom been higher quality compact disc playback in this price class! Complemented by corresponding connection options in keeping with the zeitgeist, the belt driven, analogue principle CD player will, in future, provide many hours of extraordinary listening pleasure. The CEC CD Belt Drive concept provides perfect conditions for noise-free reproduction of music, reminiscent of an analogue drive. The word about the musical cohesion, the rich detail and emotionally gripping "analogue-like" sound got out very quickly. No other CD drive has sounded so analogue to this day.

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