

CD PLAYERS & TRANSPORTS **AWARDS 2015**

Best CD transport under £500

Cambridge CXC £300

Wondering what the difference between a CD player and a CD transport is? Well, a transport concentrates on the vital work of reading the information held on a compact disc without expending effort in turning that digital signal into an analogue output, as a CD player would.

Formidable pair

So what's the benefit? The theory goes that using separate pieces of stand-alone hi-fi kit to do individual jobs will almost always provide a superior sound. This, it seems, is the case with the Cambridge CXC.

After a couple of days' running in, we match the transport with the Award-winning Arcam irDac (£400) - and they make a formidable pair.

Listening to a CD of *The Dark Knight OST*, we are immediately impressed with the precision sound the pair provide. Crisp, precise treble is married to a snappy, well-defined bassline that really drives the music along.

There's a real musicality to the piece that can get lost on lesser players, with organic, fluid interplay between instruments. The sound we hear is almost as good as Naim's £995 CD5Si player, and puts the excellent Marantz CD6005 (see above) firmly in the shade with its more expressive presentation.

This is a nicely made piece of equipment too, its machined-metal chassis matching the rest of Cambridge's impressive CX range, including the CXN streamer and the CXA60 and CXA80

amplifiers. It's a quality build that looks and feels worth every penny of the £300 you'll pay for it.

Matching sound quality

At the rear are ports to connect the transport to other members of the CX family, and two digital outputs - one S/PDIF coaxial, and a Toslink optical digital. You can use this transport, then, with any DAC that you might already own.

Does that mean we'd take the Cambridge over the Marantz? Not necessarily. The two units are similarly priced, but the Cambridge CXC is useless without a DAC to marry to it. If, on the other hand, you already have a good DAC, we would not hesitate to recommend the Cambridge CXC over a standalone CD player. You'll have to spend a good deal more than £300 to match the sound quality it offers.



*If you already have a good DAC, we'd recommend the **Cambridge CXC**. You'll have to spend a good deal more than £300 to match the sound quality it offers*

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