

**CD PLAYERS**

**Primare CD31**



**£1500**

**IT'S ALL SUBJECTIVE**, but to our eyes the CD31 is the best-looking machine in this test. There are more important things to be concerned with, naturally, but Oscar Wilde didn't say, "It's only shallow people who don't judge by appearances," for nothing. We're all interior designers now, it seems, and good-looks add to the overall charm.

We've judged a fair bit of Primare equipment lately, and found it all to be competitive, value-for-money stuff. The identically priced I30 amplifier scored five stars in August. And if one thing has become apparent from these

The CD31 continues where the excellent I30 amp left off – Primare is on some roll this year

**FOR**

Fine build and (to our eyes) svelte looks; forthright, but not overbearing, sound

**AGAINST**

Can sound a tiny bit tentative through the RCA outputs

**VERDICT**

Primare's surefooted progress continues – fine sound and good looks should ensure plentiful sales

recent tests, it's that Primare is pretty consistent in its audio signature – and the CD31 sits just as comfortably in sonic terms with its siblings as it does visually.

**Demonstratively talented...**

Loading I Am Kloot's splendid *Gods And Monsters* disc into the CD31 hints at its credentials early on. It's a painless, drama-free exercise (unlike the Cyrus or Copland machines) which illustrates the Primare's superb build. Neither does the sound disappoint. It's not the most immediately impressive listen, but the CD31 is a subtle and insightful device that finds a big, well-defined sound-stage and unearths fine levels of detail.

There's possibly less raw shove to dynamically testing material than is ideal, but the Primare communicates in spades without ever getting right up in your face like the Copland does.

Switch to the CD31's balanced outputs and it's an even more impressive story: sound separates yet further, making the stage easy to understand, and the previously rather reticent character gains plenty more crunch and bite. *Sheena Is A Punk Rocker* by The Ramones sounds genuinely insolent, packed with attitude and ropey musicianship.

With the balanced output, things step on decisively in the dynamic area: there's greater attention to detail, better grip on

**"The Primare sounds a treat, and won't be overly fussy about the kit you pair it with"**

transients and lovely, broad-stroke definition. Voices benefit too, becoming ever-more natural and expressive. At the bottom of the frequency range, there's ample weight and admirable speed; the upper frequencies attack glossily.

So what Primare has served up is a well-made, competitively priced, impeccably finished and handsome CD player that sounds a treat and won't be overly fussy about its partnering equipment. At this price, there's more to a CD player than the sound it makes, and Primare seems to have hit the bulls-eye in every area of the manufacturing process. Can you tell we're mightily impressed?



## FACTS AND FIGURES

		INTEGRATED	MULTIDISC	PHONO	BALANCED	AES/EBU DIGITAL	OPTICAL DIGITAL	COAXIAL DIGITAL	HDCD	CD TEXT	DISPLAY OFF	DIMENSIONS (HWD) CM	WEIGHT (KG)
<b>COPLAND CDA823</b> £ 1750 www.coplant.com 020 8459 3909		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	12x43x39	9
<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		
<b>SOUND</b> By turns muscular and subtle, the CDA823 is a dynamic and musical performer.	<b>BUILD</b> Looks fine on the shelf and feels okay in the hand, but is a bit noisy and truculent to use.	<b>FEATURES</b> As well specified as it needs to be – balanced outputs bring greater scale to the sound.											
<b>CYRUS CD8X/ PSX-R</b> £ 1400 www.cyrus.co.uk 01480 435577		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	8x22x36(two)	4/6
<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		
<b>SOUND</b> Envious speed, detail and dynamic ability, but not the weight of the class-leaders.	<b>BUILD</b> Sturdy but not as substantial as the best. Everything works smoothly, but look out for that tray.	<b>FEATURES</b> No balanced output, but everything else is present and correct.											
<b>DENSEN BEAT B-400 PLUS</b> £ 1400 www.densen.com +45 7518 1214		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	6x44x31	8
<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		
<b>SOUND</b> Up-front and energetic sound, loaded with detail, but a little vague at the bottom end.	<b>BUILD</b> Slim, chunky and handsome box; slick and silent disc tray adds to the impression of quality.	<b>FEATURES</b> A decent array of outputs, but the lack of balanced out gives ground to competitors.											
<b>EXPOSURE CLASSICXXII</b> £ 1400 www.exposurehifi.com 01273 423877		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	9x44x30	9
<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		
<b>SOUND</b> Very characterful sound, fast and confident, but the low frequencies can be blunt.	<b>BUILD</b> Elegant and simple layout, smooth user interface and a looker in an understated sort of way.	<b>FEATURES</b> No glaring omissions, but the best machines here feature balanced outputs for best quality.											
<b>MYRYAD MXC6000</b> £ 1400 www.myryad.co.uk 01279 501111		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	10x44x34	8
<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		
<b>SOUND</b> As understated as the looks – the soundstage and, in particular, midrange are as convincing as anything here.	<b>BUILD</b> Understated design and quality materials give proper pride of ownership. Try not to be driven mad by the power switch.	<b>FEATURES</b> Competitive with the mainstream and not short of facilities, but others here do more.											
<b>NAIM CD5x</b> £ 1450 www.naim.co.uk 01722 332266		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	7x43x30	11
<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		
<b>SOUND</b> Engaging voice and rock-solid imaging only partly compensate for well-fed bass-end presentation.	<b>BUILD</b> Rock-solid build quality, an impression of unshakable integrity and, to some, the nicest loading mechanism.	<b>FEATURES</b> The Naim incorporates a feature no other in the test does. Unfortunately, it's a DIN output.											
<b>PRIMARE CD31</b> £ 1500 www.primare.com 01423 359054		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	10x43x39	11
<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		
<b>SOUND</b> Second only to the Copland, this is a confident, coherent and involving performer.	<b>BUILD</b> Casually substantial and aesthetically covetable, this is as well-made as anything here. We think it's the best looking, too.	<b>FEATURES</b> A nap hand – does everything you could reasonably expect and a digital XLR, too.											

**TYPE:** Integrated players feature both transport and digital-to-analogue converter (DAC) in the same box; two-box players are designed so that certain components – such as the DAC and the power supply – are kept separate to optimise performance.

**MULTIDISC:** Some players can store more than one disc. High-end players are usually single-disc units. **PHONO** stereo are the most common type of interconnects used to connect a CD player to an amplifier. Also called "RCA", these are an analogue connection.

**BALANCED** outputs: These outputs allow for a superior type of analogue connection – one that's more resistant to outside electrical interference. **AES/EBU DIGITAL:** Also sometimes (wrongly) called a "balanced digital" connection, this type of digital

connector uses coaxial cable terminated with the same sockets as balanced leads. **OPTICAL DIGITAL:** High quality connection that sends a digital signal as a beam of light. **COAXIAL DIGITAL:** The best type of digital connection – sends a digital signal as an

electrical signal. Used the same kind of terminations as a standard RCA/phono lead. **HDCD:** High-definition compatible CD is a type of CD that has more data than a standard silver disc encoded on it, for better sound. **CD TEXT:** Some discs are encoded with information

relating to the artist, CD and song title that can be decoded by a suitable player to appear on the display. **DISPLAY OFF:** Some players allow you turn the display off, which tends to subtly improve the sound as it reduces interference to sound-reproduction circuits.



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
SUPERTEST WINNER

**Primare CD31**



£1500



**TEST RESULT**

The established players, such as Cyrus and Naim, got a bit of a beating here – now arise, Sir Primare!

WHEN THE CHEAPEST CD player in a test costs £1400, it might seem inappropriate to talk about 'bargains' – but that's what the Primare CD31 is. It's rare that a test (especially one as competitive as this) is won by a player other than the best sounding, but the Primare is breathing down the neck of the Copland on that score, and trounces it in other significant respects. As an all-round package, this Primare CD player impresses us hugely.

**"When the cheapest CD player costs £1400, you might think it wrong to talk about bargains, but it's what the Primare is"**

**Hedonists take note**

The Copland snatches defeat from the jaws of victory here – it's so unpleasant to use that we couldn't just concentrate on the sound. In fact, if the Densen had just a little more focus at the low end, it could have forced the best-sounding device into the bronze-medal position. As it is, the Densen is a diverting option that'll will appeal to hedonists especially.

**And the rest...**

The second tier are all capable devices: the Cyrus and Naim kit might have dropped down to four stars but they're still packed with talent, despite their relative shortcomings being exposed by the newcomers. The Myriad and Exposure players, though very different temperaments, are also worthwhile machines that any sensible person should audition. Happily, there's not a poor CD player here – these are four very capable devices that live up to their price tags, though they're demonstrably not quite the 'bargain' that the CD31 undoubtedly is. Congratulations to Primare all round.



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**NOW ADD THESE**

AMPLIFIER  
PRIMARE I30



£ 1500

August 2005  
Cracking dynamics, detail and timing. Superb build, looks and finish. The Primare I30 is a consummate music-making amp.



SPEAKERS

B&W 8055



£ 1600

July 2005  
These compact cabinets look super-stylish and sound better. At the front of this set-up, the detail, rock-solid bass and super timing will astound.



SPEAKER CABLE  
ATLAS HYPER 3.0



£ £20/m

June 2005  
A sonically flexible and adaptable cable, the Atlas is big on authority and clarity and makes the midrange shine.



INTERCONNECTS  
TRUE COLOURS INDUSTRIES COBRA



£ 175 (1m)

November 2003  
A sparkling, effective interconnect with great poise and balance. The XLR terminations will let the Primare kit strut its stuff.



MAINS CABLE  
RUSS ANDREWS CLASSIC POWERKORD



£ 75

May 2004  
Hearing is believing – a system as good as this will thrive on clean mains supplies and the Russ Andrews is among the most cost-effective upgrades you'll ever make. A superb finishing touch for this awesome system.



\*Two 5m lengths of speaker cable and two mains cables

**TOTAL £5125\***