

exposure[®]
high fidelity engineering



Musical Exposure is CD sensation

★★★★★

Exposure CD player

For Driving, fullsome sound with plenty of finesse and detail

Against Well the remote's a bit tacky...

Verdict For a first CD player this is a sensation from Exposure, even considering the price. It has its own sound quality, and it's one that will appeal to many

If you, think that a grand is a lot of money to spend on a CD player, then just look at what we've lined up on p86 - when you start getting into high-end digital transcriptors £1000 is almost sane money.

Nevertheless, it's still a lot of dough, so we're looking for some seriously deft handling of the music signal. And there's no doubt that the Exposure provides that. It's the Sussex coast company's first CD player, though its amplifiers have paved the way before it, and Exposure already boasts an enviable reputation as one of the UK's best-regarded electronics specialists.

In common with other specialist CD player makers, Exposure buys in some parts from an electronics giant - in this case Philips - and then adds its own circuitry (see our *once it's exposed* panel). This means that the player comes with a Philips handset and that the volume control feature doesn't work, despite the display indicators when you operate the up/down button. Apart from this it's a bit like genetic engineering - improving on existing stock - and the results are startling.

The main characteristic of this player, which perhaps isn't immediately obvious, is its superbly confident handling of any type of music you want to play on it. It does this by balancing an extraordinary delivery of detail and airy clarity

Thus John Mellencamp's *Jerry* from the *Mr Happy Go Lucky* album, comes across with a stadium-sized beat, the bassline driving into the room with awesome sense of power while the guitar lets rip with a searing quality. Yet there's never a sense that the player might be losing it; timing and separation are exemplary with every instrument presented in a wide and deep soundstage.

Similarly, play Janis Joplin singing *Ball and Chain* from her 1973 *Greatest Hits* set and the Exposure practically brings the smells of this open-air summer performance through the speakers. The soundstage stretches way back into the ecstatic crowd with La Joplin's lyrics echoing off some far fence back to the stage. And while these two discs display vast differences in sound quality, and the Joplin isn't a great advert for CD transfer compared with the original vinyl, the Exposure doesn't flatten them the way some CD players would.

It's a quality that makes the player involving across a wide variety of music. Whether it's the evocative sound of the peacocks and parakeets and subsequent Indian riffs from Kula Shaker's *Govinda*, or Blossom Dearie's precisely announced lyrics during *Loverman*, the player sounds as musical as you could wish.

Predictably this means that great recordings sound even better, and our disc of Benjamin Britten conducting his own piano concerto for the London Decca label is live, natural and presented with a huge acoustic. The best CD players bring out the members of the orchestra moving about here, and the Exposure has most of it; the bass is through the floor while the percussionist cracking two sticks together is as startling as you can wish. The timing and rhythm have a natural feel to them and there's a strong degree of 'being there' which lifts the music into a special experience. We like this player... a lot.

ONCE IT'S EXPOSED

The Exposure CD Player uses parts cannibalised from a Philips CD711, namely the CDM12 laser mechanism and multibit digital-to-analogue conversion chip set. It even shares the same microprocessor and hence the same remote handset - though

Exposure has aimed to give the player an analogue sound quality - more like a turntable - and opted for discrete circuits using transistors, not integrated circuits, in the clocking, filter and output stages.

This approach, although complex, has given the

coupled with fulsome drive, making it great to listen to at low volume levels as well as on those occasions when you want as much air pressure as your ears can take.

it eschews volume control in the digital domain, which might be a little confusing for some people.

These components are then used with Exposure's own circuitry in the clean-looking box with its central CD drawer.

company greater control and regulation over signal quality. 'We wanted it to sound like a record player, you know, that wide bandwidth, full-on driving sound.... not like a CD player,' says Exposure boss John Farlowe