



£1,500 ☎ 01785 711232 🌐 www.hegel.com

## HEGEL CDP2A

An elegant Norwegian player with an equally well-sorted sound

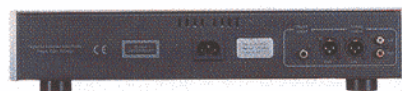
It's no secret that supplies of once-omnipresent CD transport mechanisms are drying up, but Hegel has still managed to retain a Philips VAM1202 solution for its 'high-end' CDP2A. Hegel's IR remote is also based around Philips' RC-5 codes. The player, in turn, uses many of the building blocks found in its 'reference' CDP4A model, blocks that include the signal processor, the Crystal CS4396 DAC and custom analogue stage. This single 192kHz-compatible, dual-channel DAC feeds both balanced and conventional, single-ended analogue outputs using a mix of Burr-Brown and PMI op-amps – an unusual but not unheard-of combination.

Hegel has rather ingeniously condensed all the common CD functions on to two rocker buttons that flank the display and loading tray, giving the player a very elegant appearance. The curved and crackle-coated fascia is also both distinctive, rugged and very, well, 'Scandinavian' – appropriately, since it hails from Norway. The remote is similarly rugged but minimalist in appearance, adding forward and reverse search plus repeat functions to the standard play, pause and track access facilities on the front panel.

While Hegel's marketing is accompanied by a significant dose of philosophising about 'SoundEngine' technology and the like, the company doesn't shy away from providing specific, and accurate, technical details.

The seriousness of Hegel's intent is obvious upon hearing its very composed and communicative sound. The CDP2A may have followed Densen's unfortunate B-400, but it immediately demonstrated a greater poise and sophistication about its music that "floats effortlessly on a gossamer cloud". Norah Jones was at her sleazy best, not quite as 'tarty' as she was with the Roksan, but still betraying "sufficient flesh" to keep our panel eager for more!

The player's inherently neutral balance holds every instrument in the right place at



the right time, contributing to a transparent, coherent whole that captivates and draws you in. Vocals sound deliciously breathy while piano has a realistic percussive quality, the notes enjoying a genuinely believable sustain and decay. The *Stabat* CD was described as "exquisite" in reference to the haunting prowess of the soloist, the intonation of the voice firmly punctuated and drawing us readily into the performance. The strings, pipes and voice were beautifully integrated but still, perhaps, not so sharply defined as they were with the Cyrus CDB, which had provided us with the boldest rendition of this classical masterpiece.

The Hegel has a slightly more organic quality, revealed in the expansive and highly integrated rendition of Anastacia's *Freak Of Nature*. Track after track from this CD bubbled with detail from the harmonies, strings, bass and what sounds like a squeezebox to the rear of the soundstage. This player can fill the room with a big sound and yet maintain a firm grip on all its elements, never biting off more than it can chew. Tonally, the CDP2A was judged by our panel as "spot-on", helping it deliver a thoroughly wholesome, "nourishing" sound that will surely grow with the capacity of your system. **HFC**

### VERDICT

**SOUND >>> 89%**



**FEATURES >>> 78%**



**BUILD >>> 86%**



**VALUE >>> 82%**



This is a technically proficient and masterly-sounding player built by people who clearly know what they are doing. The relatively high £1,500 price tag does dent its ultimate value, however.

**HI-FI CHOICE 85%**  
OVERALL SCORE >>>

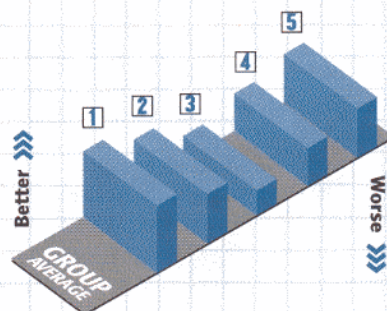


### LAB REPORT

Hegel's proprietary analogue stage makes very good use of the CS4396 DAC's differential output, achieving a creditable 109dB A-wtd S/N ratio from a slightly high 2.36V peak output. Distortion, too, is remarkably well managed with a *worst case* result of 0.0006% right across the audio band. To achieve just 0.00055% at 20kHz/OdBfs is almost unheard of and demonstrates that today's D/A converters are actually capable of far better performance than is commonly realised.

At lower digital levels, figures of 0.00055% at -10dBfs and 0.005% at -30dBfs are equally impressive. Stopband rejection of 109dB is about as good as it gets while jitter is squeezed down to ~80psec. Similarly, crosstalk is minimal at <-120dB through the midrange and <-105dB at 20kHz. The only minute blip on Hegel's copybook is a 0.6dB 'ripple' in its response with rare, pre-emphasised CDs. Otherwise, its response is flat to within -0.04dB over the entire audioband.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >>> 55%
- 2] Jitter >>> 40%
- 3] Linearity >>> 20%
- 4] Dynamic range >>> 28%
- 5] Digital filter >>> 40%

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Maximum output level	2.3V	2.36V
Distortion (1 kHz @ 0dBfs)	<0.002%	0.0005%
Signal-to-noise ratio	>105dB	109dB