



The Azur 740C is very talented at the price. It acts not just as an upsampling player, but also a digital-to-analogue converter.

Cambridge use Adaptive Time filtering from Anagram Technologies of Switzerland, with digital signal processing carried out through an Analog Devices Black fin DSP to yield a highly processed digital signal running at a high 384kHz sample rate. This passes through Wolfson DACs connected in differential mode for best noise cancellation. It's a lot of processing for a E 995 player, but Cambridge also provide two digital inputs, each with an optical and electrical (phono socket) SP/DIF connector. These can be selected from the front panel. Whilst CD plays only at 384kHz rate, external sources can be converted to 48, 96 or 192kHz at 16, 20 or 24bit resolution, with or without dither applied to reduce low level distortion. As Cambridge say, most CDs are dithered in any case nowadays to ameliorate the grotty sound of 16bit, so you don't need this when using the 740C as a stand alone DAC for CD transport, so much as other digital sources.

The Azur 740C measures 430x315x115 mm and weighs 6.4kgs. Audio output are phono sockets, and there are optical and electrical digital outputs too.

SOUND QUALITY

Perhaps predictably, the Azur 740C has an easy-going balance that initially comes over as gentle. Good upsampled players I have used in the past were not dissimilar, I recall. *But the player has a sophistication to its delivery that becomes apparent as you relax and spend time with it.* There is less immediate force and impact than from the Vincent or Roksan, *although in the longer term the 740C proved weighty*

and detailed, if with more foreshortened depth perspective than the other, considerably more expensive models. Celine Dion's 'A New day' was vastly detailed, as crisp as a winter morning and was underpinned by prodigious bass.

I admired the way the Cambridge mined information from discs and laid it out clearly; this is an upfront player across the upper midband, but it's less forthcoming across the lower midband, losing warmth and some atmosphere in the process. *Here is a player to look right into what's on CD; it places no gloss*

over things, displaying a degree of revelation that most rivals are unable to match. In its very own way, then, the 740C is great value.

VERDICT

A vividly revealing player with rock-solid lower bass, if a frosty demeanour. Great value

FOR

- extremely detailed
- insightful
- seismic deep bass

AGAINST

- Lacks warmth
- (Comment: isn't that coloration? Warmth...)

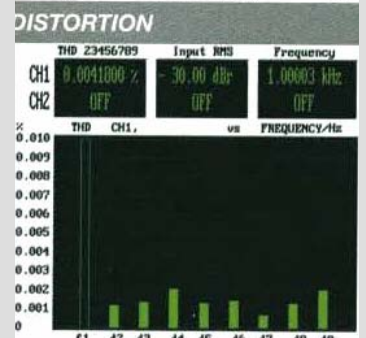
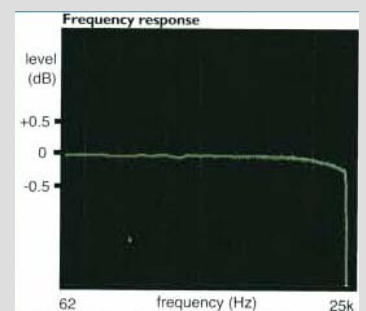
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Cambridge has a classic frequency characteristic, with slowly falling upper treble from a well damped time domain response. This tends to give a smooth sound, *with no emphasis of upper treble, unlike the peakier response appearing more commonly nowadays.*

There was no measurable distortion at -30dB, our measurement showing noise, another analyser revealed, not discrete distortion harmonics. Under these circumstances distortion measures a low 0.004%, and at -60dB it was again low at 0.24%, helping toward a fine EIAJ dynamic range value of 111dB.

Jitter measurement of the digital output returned a value of around 10pS over most of the audio band, with no programme-related components.

With wide channel separation, normal output and low noise this player measured well in all areas. It should sound smooth and easy-going.
NK



Frequency response (-1dB)
2Hz - 20.8kHz

| | |
|----------------------|----------|
| Distortion | |
| 0dB | 0.0007% |
| -6dB | 0.00045% |
| -60dB | 0.024% |
| -80dB | 2.8% |
| -80dB dithered | 2.3% |
| Separation (1kHz) | 130dB |
| Noise (IEC A) | -114dB |
| Distortion | 0.02% |
| Dynamic range (EIAJ) | 111dB |
| Output | 2.3V |