



B&W CM5: Could this be Britain's best small speaker?
our verdict

CD players compared

Cyrus, NAD, Roksan and more all under £1,600



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Issue No. **335** August 2010 **£3.99**

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Micromega CD-10 £820

It has a limited repertoire, but this player still divides opinion on its performance abilities

DETAILS

- ORIGIN:**
France
- WEIGHT:**
3.5kg
- DIMENSIONS:**
(WxHxD)
430x70x270mm
- FEATURES:**
- Analogue output: single unbalanced
 - Digital output: electrical S/PDIF
- DISTRIBUTOR:**
Absolute Sounds
- TELEPHONE:**
020 8971 3909
- WEBSITE:**
micromega-hifi.com

Micromega's name was made with mid-price CD players, and the company continues to enjoy a high reputation for such devices. As the baby of the range, this model doesn't do anything particularly surprising, but it's clearly a carefully designed piece of kit. Micromega makes particular mention of the power supply arrangements, which start with an R-core transformer.

The R-core design originated in far-Eastern budget audio, but as Micromega points out, one of its characteristics is a rather narrow frequency band, which isn't ideal for all applications but, in low-power equipment like CD players, it effectively contributes a degree of mains filtering. Subsequent measures include shunt regulation with associated current sources, a slightly more complicated arrangement than the usual series regulators but one capable of very high performance.

The transport is a regular CD-Audio type, feeding a DAC chip from Analog Devices, which includes an oversampling digital filter, while the analogue filter and output stage use op-amps as usual, most components being surface-mount types which, as Micromega points out, allows signal paths to be kept short and simple.

Operation of the player is fine, though it's a little confusing that the stop button is actually labelled 'Disc'

– it does function as eject as well, but some indication of this dual purpose would have been nice.

Sound quality

Something of an opinion-splitter, this player seems to have been liked and disliked for much the same reasons. Its balance is a little on the light side, so if deep and powerful bass is very much your thing you may stay disappointed. On the other hand, it's also very fast, not just in the bass but across the band, with excellent articulation and very good dynamic agility. Very much the equal of the rapid rise and fall in level that characterises any decently recorded human voice. It made more sense than any of the others in the group of the five-part madrigals, clearly presenting voices of distinctive character.

It does seem to be just a touch uncommitted in heavier repertoire, probably because of the bass lightness, and even the most complimentary among our listeners felt it missed some of the energy in the Ian Dury track.

It was more successful in the Shostakovich, but still seemed a little dry and oddly slightly distant, too. There's some good detail to be had, however, and images are clear and stable laterally if, perhaps, a touch constrained in depth. But something about the highest treble doesn't

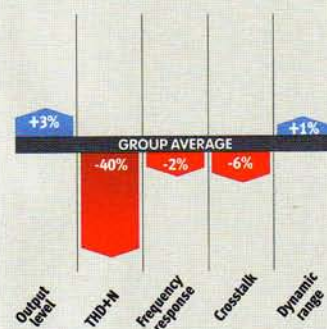
always quite click: it can be rather lacking in sweetness. Because of this, we felt the long-term listening experience is not as involving as one might wish for, despite the clearly admirable energy and the considerable degree of insight. Most successful with vocal and small-ensemble music, this is not quite a full all-rounder – but as the cheapest in the group it puts in a distinctive and not unattractive performance.

TECH LABS

LAB REPORT

Another solidly built player and the only one of the group to support CD-Text (rarely found on commercial discs, but a feature of PC CD-burning software like Nero). A strong set of results overall, although we noted a significant disparity between our left-channel-to-right (-89.2dB) and right-channel-to-left (-82.1 dB) crosstalk measurements. Having said that, even the worst of these two figures is highly unlikely to impact on areas like stereo imaging. In standby, power consumption is nine watts – this increases only by two watts during playback. We encountered no digital-error pitfalls.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

- SOUND QUALITY**
★★★★★ **LIKE:** Good detail, excellent agility and very good with voices
- VALUE FOR MONEY**
★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Rather bass-light and seems to lack some treble sweetness
- BUILD QUALITY**
★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A good value player, which will appeal to listeners enamoured of the human voice
- FEATURES**
★★★★★

OVERALL

