

Group test verdict

It's been a week of non-stop disc loading and hard listening, but it's finally time for **David Price** to reveal the scores for our six contenders

IF THESE SIX silver disc spinners are anything to go by, it is now impossible to buy a poor machine at this price. All are surprisingly good, in their respective ways – unlike just a decade ago, for example, when it was far more hit and miss.

As the lowest-scoring player here, the Cyrus CD i is a pleasant performer that's held back, I suspect, by the lack of its matching PSX-R2 power supply, which adds around £795 to the total cost. As supplied, it's smooth, musical and fun, but lacks focus and grip.

The Denon DCD-1600NE is a very decent player too; it does a lot really

well and in some systems, especially mid-forward ones, will work brilliantly. Its sound is highly accomplished in respect of soundstaging and bass, but lacks the lyricism of some others here.

Ranked fourth is YBA's Heritage CD100, which is almost the opposite; tonally warm and well upholstered, it is held back by its lack of what the Denon does well – detail resolution and soundstaging. Either way, it's a pleasant listen and will charm those who like a sumptuous sound.

The Marantz ND8006 ranks close by; sonically it's cleaner and tidier

with real focus, but it has a welter of facilities that you would normally expect from a digital music hub that's far more expensive. It's exceptionally good value if you need all these features.

Rega's Apollo is the surprise of the group. On sound quality alone it's a close-run thing between the YBA and the Marantz players, but it sounds so good at the price that you can't underplay its value. It's wonderfully good fun, so much so that you forget its shortcomings – such as poor depth perspective – and enjoy the groove of the music.



Musical Fidelity's M3scd is the surprise victor as its boasts no special technology. It shows that good basic ingredients can often win against fancier designs and is a very involving listen, yet subtle and detailed too – a sophisticated performer at the price.



Make/model	Cyrus CD i	Denon DCD-1600NE	Marantz ND8006	Musical Fidelity M3scd	Rega Apollo	YBA Heritage CD100
Price	£1,195	£899	£1,099	£1,150	£629	£1,100
Sound	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Build	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Half-width slot loader with great build, style and a super-smooth sound	Impressive build and finish, wide feature set and powerful, 3D soundstaging	Do-it-all player with DAC and streaming functionality, plus clean, open sonics	An unassuming CD player with fine build and highly enjoyable sound delivery	Whacky-looking player with a performance that's way beyond its price	Charming CD player with unique user interface and warm and sweet sound

Key features

Streaming	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Built-in DAC	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
RCA outs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
XLR outs	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Upsampling	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

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AMPLIFIER:
Naim Nait 5si **£1,029 HFC 420**

The latest in a long line of high-quality integrateds stretching back to the eighties, this amplifier is unalloyed fun to listen to – with a distinctively musical gait – and has enough power to drive most budget loudspeakers easily.



LOUDSPEAKER:
Acoustic Energy AE300 **£599 HFC 434**

If it's affordable standmount speakers that you want, then the AE300 is hard to beat. With high-quality drive units inside a superbly finished cabinet, you just need to add speaker stands for the perfect partner to your favourite CD player.



LOUDSPEAKER:
Bowers & Wilkins 703 S2 **£2,399 HFC 433**

If you have cash to throw at a serious floorstander, then look no further than this big box. With much of the fancy technology found in the company's pricier products, it delivers a realistic sound with a commanding presence.

