

BEST CD PLAYER £1500+

Cyrus CD Xt SE/DAC X £800/£1100

CYRUS PICKS UP our top-price Award too, for its range-topping transport and DAC. Only half this combo is new – the DAC X is broadly unchanged since WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION last tested it back in 2005 (when, incidentally, it cost £1000).

The CD Xt SE transport is essentially the CD 8 SE with an optimised power supply, and minus the audio and digital to analogue circuitry. By splitting

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transport and DAC, and throwing extra budget at each section, Cyrus has managed to achieve another giant leap in performance.

Go from the CD 6 SE to the 8 and then to this transport and DAC, and at each step you'll notice that Cyrus's sonic signature stays intact, but the level of insight, finesse and authority takes a massive step up.

The CD Xt SE/DAC X combination is profoundly impressive right from the off. Playing Jeff Buckley's *Lover, You*

VERDICT

This transport and DAC combo isn't cheap, but it is good enough to stuff most players under ten grand

Like all the SE range, the CD Xt SE features a swanky new slot-loading mechanism

Should Have Come Over, the Cyrus pair create an expansive, explicit soundstage – individual musical strands are simple to follow, yet integrate smoothly.

Incredible eye for detail

Timing, a traditional Cyrus strong suit, is immaculate – each strum, pluck or hit starts and stops with great precision and easy fluidity, making light work of testing tempos or sudden changes of emphasis. There's an eye for detail the most nightmarish sergeant major would be proud of, and the ability to lay the minutiae of a performance bare without losing sight of that performance.

Just as fast, and plenty more dynamic than Award-winning Cyrus models of the past, this duo judges high frequency attack scrupulously and gives vocalists fistfuls of expression and character. And down in the low frequencies, where previous Cyrus efforts have often sounded how a whippet looks, the CD Xt SE/DAC X offers punch and substance to go along with the sort of pace and texture that lifts the player well above its nominal competitors.

During the test period we have listened to a stack of music on this combo, spanning decades of recordings and a whole heap of genres, and this pairing still leaves us smiling every time.

