



Primare CD22



Swedish audio brand Primare continues to offer a mix of aesthetics, build quality and performance that overdelivers on expectations.

Make no mistake – as the pricing suggests, this not a cheap brand. But even considered in its price context (and, let's face it, the SA rand exchange rate is not doing us any favours), Primare owners usually get more than they bargained for – certainly in sonic terms.

The CD22 CD player is something of an anomaly. While the compact disc appears to have lost its status as the music medium of choice to streaming, finding a player dedicated to the CD format is rare – especially since the CD22 doesn't play SACDs as well.

It's Primare's contention that, regardless of CD's current status, there are a lot of

people who own extensive compact disc libraries, and who will benefit from a quality disc player capable of extracting the most from those CDs. The CD22 is aimed primarily at those users.

However, the CD22 does have some additional talents worth noting. The on-board Burr-Brown PMC1792A D/A converter chip and SRC 4382 asynchronous upconverter make for a formidable pairing when it comes to handling incoming digital signals.

Upconversion is selectable in three steps – 48 kHz, 96 kHz and 192 kHz – or switched off. Both coaxial and optical digital outputs allow the CD22 to be hooked up to a standalone DAC if required.

There's also a USB 2.0 Type A input, which will accept flash drives or USB portable hard drives, further extending the CD22's talent set. However, navigating through

the multiple folders of an extensively populated HDD is a fiddly affair.

There's nothing wrong with the display, which is bright and legible even from a distance, and can be dimmed in four steps. But when you're working your way through a folder structure with multiple levels, finding a specific track can prove elusive and frustrating.

Those familiar with Primare's products will instantly recognise the solid metal casework and the 'floating' front fascia, the latter sparsely populated in a typical expression of Swedish minimalism.

The transport tray is centrally mounted, with the display on the right. Controls are restricted to an on/standby switch, as well as play/pause and a stop/eject buttons.

By comparison, the slim and smart system remote control has a full system control feature set, not all of which is



applicable to the CD22, but will please those with an all-Primare set-up.

Under the covers, you'll find an R-Core power transformer feeding the audio boards, while the analogue and digital sections are separated. The transport and control logic board get their own power feed.

I did a lot of my listening to the CD22 in conjunction with the I22 integrated amplifier – a combination that's popular with buyers not only because the case-work is identically dimensioned and makes for a visually attractive pairing, but also because there is an obvious sonic synergy between the two devices.

However, I also ran the CD22 with our Electrocompaniet PI-2D, a Line Magnetic LA-211A valve amp on review at the time, and the Naim Uniti2 as sonic counter-points. The KEF LS50 monitors were our speakers of choice throughout.

I started off proceedings with the vintage but lovely Living Stereo recording of Jascha Heifetz performing Bruch's *Violin Concerto No. 1* (Living Stereo RCA 176/24 FLAC). The Primare treated the rich,

sonorous violin and the attentive but muscular orchestral accompaniment with deference, doing full justice to the scope and pathos of the music, and delivering every note with presence and precision.

I enjoyed the Primare's coherent delivery, which captured the impact and the momentum of the performance to thrilling effect. There was no sense of it imposing a specific sonic character on the music – rather, it just provided a clear and open platform on which the music was allowed to come to its full, majestic right.

It certainly captured the intensity of Heifetz's not only adeptly laying bare the delicate passages, but also making the most of the legendary violinist's searing, even pyrotechnic technique.

The performance's considerable dynamic contrasts were succinctly delivered, too.

'She's 22', off Norah Jones' *Little Broken Hearts* (Blue Note CD) had just the right space and shimmer to showcase the singer's evocative voice to spine-tingling effect, with an almost spooky guitar providing a carefully embroidered, richly

detailed backdrop. The Primare really got to the grips with the emotive power of the performance, paying close attention to even the subtlest of details, yet never losing sight of the music's intrinsic intent.

This is a fine CD player that makes the most of any disc. It's forgiving without shirking its responsibility to the truthfulness of the music, while the versatility of accepting music files on a USB is a further boon. Add the superior build quality to the equation, and the Primare CD22 emerges as an excellent sonic investment.

Deon Schoeman

VITAL STATS

Digital conversion ... Up to 192 kHz/24-bit
DAC Burr-Brown PCM1792A
Upconversion Burr-Brown SRC 4382
Frequency response 20 Hz - 20 kHz
(-0,5 dB)
Signal-to-noise ratio 100 dB
(20 Hz - 20 kHz, unweighted)
Analogue outputs 1x stereo RCA
Digital outputs 1x coaxial RCA,
1x Toslink optical
Digital inputs 1x USB Type A
Connectivity RS232 serial port,
12V trigger in/out
Dimensions (WxDxH)
..... 430 x 375 x 106 mm
Weight 10,5 kg

Verdict

Plenty of verve, detail and get-up-and-go from this superbly built disc player. Not SACD compatible – but offers versatility of a USB input.

Price R29 900

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OUR RATING: 83/100

