

AUDIO REVIEWS



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CD3 Signature



METRONOME TECHNOLOGIE CD3 SIGNATURE

Reviewers: Marja & Henk

Sources: CEC TL5100, Audio Note tube DAC, Philips DVP 5500S SACD/DVD player, *Metronome CD3 Signature* [in for review]

Preampl/integrated: Tact RCS 2.0 room control system; modified Audio Note Meishu with AVVT, JJ or KR Audio 300B output tubes; *Moscode 401HR* [in for review]

Speakers: Avantgarde Acoustic Duo Omega; Avantgarde Acoustic Solo in HT 2.0 setting; Audio Note AN/Jsp silver-wired; *Mobile Fidelity OML-2* [in for review]

Cables: Audio Note AN/Vx interconnects; Siltech Paris interconnects; Gizmo silver interconnect; Qunex 75 reference interconnect; Crystal Cable CrystalConnect Reference interconnect, CrystalDigit S/PDIF RCA/RCA and RCA/BNC, Y-cable, Crystal Cable Piccolo iPod to XLR, CrystalPower Reference AC-Eur/IEC; CrystalSpeak Reference, Audio Note AN-L, Gizmo silver LS cable; *Virtual Dynamics Revelation power cords* [in for review], *Bocchino Morning Glory* [in for review]

Power line conditioning: Omtec PowerControllers

Equipment racks: Solid Tech Radius

Sundry accessories: IAR carbon CD damper; Denson demagnetizer CD; Nespa #1; Tact RCS calibrated microphone and software; Exact Audio Copy software; Compaq server w/Windows Server 2003 and XP; wood, brass and aluminum cones and pyramids; Xitel surround processor; Manley Skipjack; Boston Audio Design TuneBlocks

Room treatment: Acoustic System Resonators; Gizmo's Harley Davidson cap

Review component retail: € 6750

Not only the most beautiful wines, deliciously crusty breads, tantalizing cheeses, uncompromised comfortable cars, breathtaking films and of course *l'amour* come from France. There is another product range perfectly suited to indulge your senses: *Metronome Technologie*.

Toulouse in the south of France is home to Metronome. As they say themselves, the company is dedicated to delivering the best possible sound quality at a predetermined budget. Complementarily, the resultant product should look good and the construction inside and out should be of the highest caliber.



These are quite some demands for any manufacturer to meet for one's own product. For us, it proved to be a matter of verifying these bold statements during the review period with the CD3 Signature.

The delivery box revealed a 14kg heavy CDP. Being French, Metronome uses its own standards for size. With 450mm x 140mm x 375mm for width, height and depth, the CD3 is more statement than follower. The front plate is machined from a solid slab of aluminum and in the case of our review model, was clear anodized. A full black chassis is also available. The 2cm thick front helps to keep up the weight of what follows, a box formed of 3mm thick sheet metal. Knocking on the player results in a fairly dull thud. Metronome spent time on damping the enclosure. Only the bottom plate remains responsive to the knuckle test.

The CD player is a member of the top-loading family of drives. In order to load a CD, you need to slide back a 1.5cm thick door that gets solid friction from the rails - not too smooth, not too much resistance. An indent helps to get a grip on the door with thumb or forefinger. Once the door is closed, the CD compartment is fully sealed from the rest of the world where stray light is concerned.

The designer and owner of Metronome, Dominique Giner, used to work for Jadis. This no doubt explains the striking external resemblance between the Jadis JD3 and the Metronome CD3 Signature.

A part of the raised area on top of the player is reserved for the controls. Five stainless-steel balls activate the expected functions. True to form, the identifying logos for the controls are unique. Forget single or double arrows, a square or double bars. Instead and just as the French carmakers reserve for themselves, Metronome follows the great French *liberté* of industrial design by relying on its own symbols. A couple of sawtooth and square waves denote what control is in charge of doing what.

Three Delrin feet support the player to damp mechanical vibration. Delrin is also used for musical instruments like certain Irish flutes and tin whistles. Even guitar picks are made from this acetate resin. In the middle of each Delrin footer sits a metallic plate that is used to attach the provided magnetic cones - a clever solution to solve the problem of attaching extra parts to cone-shaped, upside-down footers.

The remote control is a heavy black device able to control the player and other Metronome gear. Here we found the conventional logos for the controls. Around back, the CD3 Signature provides connections to the rest of the big bad world. A decent IEC power inlet resides next to the mains rocker and a tiny additional switch. The latter activates the frontal display or eliminates the blue lights completely. Then there is the S/PDIF RCA terminal directly followed by the right analogue RCA outlet. For unknown reasons, both RCA terminals use a red ring indicator. So caution when connecting cables. Between the two single-ended analogue outs sit a pair of balanced outputs. The left-channel RCA is located almost at the edge of the player.

An extra remark on connectivity options. There has been a trend of late to push the extremes of cable design. On one side, there are manufacturers like Crystal Cable who produce interconnects as thin as imaginable. On the other side, manufacturers offer very thick cables that add huge connectors to get a grip. Here the Bocchino Morning Glory from Down Under comes to mind. In order to facilitate this type of space-devouring connectors, terminals must be generously spaced. The CD3 provides ample space if the S/PDIF connector is not used for bulky analogue connectors.

We put the player in its spot and connected the necessary cables to our integrated amplifier and the power grid. Tripping the mains switch lights up the display which states "no diSC", with a capital S and C indeed. Funny guys, those French.

Powered up, we noticed something with the transport door opened. At the lower left corner, there is a micro trigger to detect open/close status of the door. Next there is a bright blue LED at the back of the compartment. This LED is placed at CD level and switched on when the door is opened, switched off when the door is closed. Metronome's top model, the Kalista, uses a similar LED that remains on as long as a CD is spinning to counter any stray light from the environment interfering with the laser's aim.

Upon closing the door, the LED extinguishes and the motor starts spinning the CD. A second motor places the laser sled at the correct height and position to retrieve a usable signal from the shiny disc. Unsuccessful reading displays "no diSC". Otherwise, the table of contents is read into memory after which the motor stops and the display confirms track number and total playing time. Only after pressing the play button on the CDP or remote does the CD3 Signature start playing the disc. With this behavior, it's obvious that no start-up speed records are threatened.



A magnetic Delrin puck secures the CD atop the spindle. If the puck gets omitted, the CD inside the compartment might go airborne and damage the player's delicate innards. Those aren't standard fare even though Metronome uses the well-known Philips CDM12 Pro as the base for the CD3 transport section. The off-the-shelf Pro gets heavily tweaked, with the gents in Toulouse swapping out the spindle for a stainless steel rod whose diameter equals the hole in a CD. Though made of stainless steel, the rod is magnetic and the puck attaches to it. Besides making for a solid transmission between motor and CD, the new axle is also a perfect drain for static electricity. A CD spinning in air creates static. When this is shunted to ground, it can't distort the signal.

The Metronome upsamples Redbook's native 44.1kHz/16-bit signal to 96KHz and 24-bit word length before being processed by the 192kHz DAC with a sloped filter midway between a full brickwall filter and no filter at all. Four transformers isolate the various stages.

After loading our first CD, the sensation of "something's amiss" grew stronger with each new track. The following CDs included small-ensemble acoustic fare and here we identified the cause. Despite the very natural and musical -- live-like -- rendition, transients were a little left behind. Leading-edge behavior adds to overall dynamic character as the first click of a rim shot or the attack of a bow just ahead of the developing tone. The CD3 Signature seemed very sensitive of how it communicated with the remainder of the electronics. It took quite some swapping of interconnects and power cables to arrive at the desired sound. The CD3 prefers an interconnect that other players might categorize as slightly bright. Further, it seemed -- though we did not measure this -- that the output voltage was a bit on the low side. In the power cable department, the CD3 proved picky as well. Use the best shielded cable you can find.

After our tuning, listening to the CD3 Signature was simply pleasant. The player has a distinctive sound that's never harsh or shrill. Transients are not the most powerful so you never have to blink your eyes during sudden attacks. In the bass, the CD3 Signature displays the same mild manners. The mids are open and well pronounced and timbres translate very naturally. Due to the overall cohesive balance, this is a machine that invites long listening sessions. You aren't seated front row but very comfortably a few rows back for a more relaxed midhall perspective.

Post scriptum

After we had reached the above conclusions, we had to reconfigure our setup for the next assignment. This reshuffling freed up a few footers we received from Austin Jackson of Boston Audio Design together with his turntable mat. "Why not use his BAD TuneBlocks with tungsten carbide ball under the CD3 Signature", we thought? That made a big difference. Instantly the sound became too bright and detailed. No wonder, we still used a fairly bright-sounding interconnect to overcome the player's inherent limpidness. Going directly to the top with the Stealth Indra, the CD3 gained speed and incisiveness and our previously noted reservations about subdued transient behavior were transcended. Replacing the Delrin footers for a block of graphite, with an intermediate metal ball coupling directly to the bottom plate of the CD3 Signature, tuned the player to our liking. Now we could conclude that Metronome's statement of delivering the best possible sound for the budget was indeed met.



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Manufacturer's [website](#)