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CREEK EVO

Creek's first Chinese-built CD player keeps the price in check

The Evo range made its *HFC* debut in issue 283, when we looked at this player alongside its amplifier stablemate. These units mark Creek's transition to overseas manufacturing (for its cheaper ranges), which has allowed the company to put some very high-end-y stuff into them, not least the heavyweight metal casework.

Creek has elected to use a 'proper' CD-Audio transport rather than some variety of ROM drive, a decision we wholeheartedly endorse on account of its swift disc loading and low levels of mechanical noise. Following the transport mechanism, a Burr-Brown chip performs digital-to-analogue conversion and analogue filtering, while the output stages are courtesy of some familiar, high-performance op-amps. The economies achieved through Far East manufacture have evidently allowed Creek the luxury of separate op-amps, something audiophiles often regard as worth the effort.

Construction inside and out is very good, with passive electronic components ranging from good commercial grade to a couple of tweaky audio output capacitors, while the power supply relies on an R-core transformer with several regulators feeding the various sections of electronics. The display is a nice blue colour but can be a bit garish of an evening – luckily it is dimmable. Interestingly, the promotional literature candidly admits that upsampling has been deliberately avoided, as Creek believes it is not viable to do it correctly at this kind of budget. Creek also tells us that, to avoid interference, the control chips are fed from the same clock source as the converter.

SOUND QUALITY

Our listeners all agreed that the Evo's treble was boosted, relative to the rest of the band. The extent of this, however, is so small that it doesn't really manifest itself as brightness, appearing instead in the form of seemingly enhanced reverberation, a shift of emphasis from one instrument to another, or even very



mild blurring of high frequencies. This also depends on the programme material and also on how each listener reacts.

The baroque chamber music track was a critical arbiter of this. Harpsichord and violins are treble-rich instruments, and compared with the other players, they seemed a little more 'present' though not always quite as neatly defined on the Evo. On the other hand, they were well placed in a believable acoustic space and had a generally natural tonality: one listener thought the violins a little hard, but the others were untroubled.

Bass from this player is excellently controlled and fully extended, with a really taut quality, though few listeners would describe it as 'fast'. One of our listeners felt the piano track lacked percussiveness. Fair enough perhaps, but another listener pinpointed the upside of that during the very same track, when he praised the player's cohesiveness.

As for detail, the panel's notes suggest that this is good but perhaps not excellent. Then again, they didn't mention it very often, and we were inclined to think it better than par for the course. Once again, detail is not thrust at you, more offered in an understated kind of way, and that takes time to register as the major plus that it is. Imaging is also good, with a nice sense of depth. **HFC**

VERDICT

SOUND >> 83%



FEATURES >> 82%



BUILD >> 87%



VALUE >> 88%



A minute degree of subjective lift in the treble affects different music in different (subtle) ways, but for most music and in most systems, this is a very capable player that offers fine value.

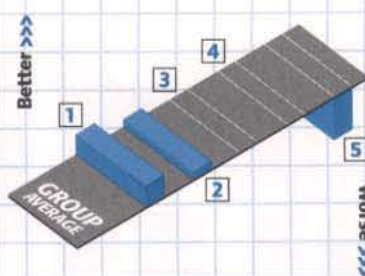
HI-FI CHOICE 86%
OVERALL SCORE

LAB REPORT

At 2.4V, the Evo's output level is a couple of dB higher than the notional standard and thus liable to be misleading in A/B demonstrations – although this is such a big difference that one is at least more likely to spot it for what it is! It is sourced from a particularly low impedance, too, so we would have no qualms whatever about hanging long leads on the outputs, if necessary.

For the rest, there is very little to worry about. Distortion is once again very low and varies little with frequency, though it did creep up slightly on just one channel in the extreme treble. It soon sinks into obscurity at output levels below -10dB, though, and frankly, if one adheres to the 'first watt is the most important' rule, the player can be regarded as effectively distortion-free. Jitter is low, speed accuracy impeccable and apart from the near-perpetual gripe about filter performance about 20kHz we have few real criticisms at all.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >> +15%
- 2] Jitter >> +5%
- 3] Linearity >> 0%
- 4] Dynamic range >> 0%
- 5] Digital filter >> -30%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Maximum output level	2.0V	2.44V
Total harmonic distortion	0.0008%	0.0012%
Signal-to-noise ratio	> 100dB	108dB