

CD player Accuphase DP-67

The Real Thing

by Joachim Pfeiffer

Today's one-for-all players are threatening a traditional hi-fi species, namely the pure-bred CD player. Accuphase however are about to stop this trend.

You'll have to get used to this: more and more these days the market is flooded by digital players which not only can play back CDs but also DVD-Video and -Audio, or SACD dual- or multi-channel, and sometimes, as a side job so to speak, also digital formats like MP3, etc. (you name it!). No doubt, this is going to become an every day's situation. Likewise you'll have to get accustomed to the fact that these machines will most likely crash as often as the PC in your office. It's because these new high-tech tools are, strictly speaking, nothing but computers, handsomely packed in a case with typical hi-fi looks. Now, should you, dear friends of the discriminating hi-fi guild, have absolutely no interest in this questionable future and instead would rather savour music at the highest level then I've got just the right offer for you: a CD player from the house of Accuphase of which the internal components have been made for nothing but to play back conventional silver disks, in stereo nevertheless.

Well, the engineers at Accuphase really had a go. Nearly all that's expensive and sonically superior was given to the DP-67. Obviously, an unspoken goal was to offer an adequate alternative to the DP-75V which is going to be discontinued. After all, this likewise "CD only" out-of-this-world player came with a hefty price tag, whereby the look-alike DP-67 merely fetches a good price, which can be considered an almost modest price for a component from Accuphase.

From the laser unit to the analogue output stages, this machine really knew how to convince us from a technical point of view. A fully digital control circuitry of the mechanical section allows the optimisation of the servo performance for each individual CD in order to drastically reduce the error rate and, as a side effect, enhances long-term operation stability by eliminating the influence of ambient temperature fluctuations. Also quite sophisticated seems the employment of an ultra-compact RF amplifier being integrated in the laser pickup unit. This special amplifier is augmenting the originally very low signal from the laser in order to make it more resistant against ambient noise interference. Actually, both measures have one thing in common, namely that the error rate is substantially reduced as well. No doubt, a precise error corrections is fine, but it's better still if there is nothing at all to do for it.

The D/A converter stage, dubbed MDS++ by Accuphase, can also be considered perfect. Per channel it features four Delta-Sigma converters from Analog Devices in parallel configuration for the purpose of achieving a flawless signal conversion: less noise, hardly any distortions, outstanding linearity and the best dynamic range. The results are definitely worth the efforts.

With the DP-67 Accuphase have, in all probability, built the presently best CD player on this planet.

We couldn't believe our ears when the DP-67 came to play in AUDIO's listening room. In particular with complex music like the one on "Days and Nights of Blue Luck Inverted" by Kip Hanrahan (American Clavé) it could demonstrate that it's definitely on par with the CD/SACD player DP-85 from the same maker. And after having warmed up for a couple of days we realised that the DP-67 even managed to leave the DP-85 slightly behind. For example, with the disk mentioned above it was audibly easier to distinguish if there was either an electro bass or an acoustic double bass being played. Moreover, this new CD player went stunningly straightforward, together with an abundance of information, through the wildest sequences, yet without sacrificing the musical context on the altar of precision. But this is not all because something else attracted our attention: with the DP-67 it seemed that even if music was played back really loud through Focal's super speakers JM Lab Grande Utopia, things still sounded pleasantly, i.e. no pain in the neck - just like in real life. Add to this an overwhelming richness of sound colours which eventually sums up to the best CD player hitherto performing in AUDIO's listening room.

By a hair's breadth this review was to become a true sensation: could we really take the responsibility to award -due to its small sonic superiority in CD playback mode- more sonic points to the DP-67 than to the DP-85? To be on the safe side AUDIO therefore obtained the last unsold sample of the DP-75V, and upon the first audition it did not come as a surprise that we could very well hear the enormous similarity within the family. So, 125 sonic points have been achieved by the DP-67 with hardly any efforts. 125 points are as many as the DP-75V once scored very easily and, well, as many as the DP-85 only just made them.

Make no mistake: there are millions of CDs out there, as opposed to perhaps a few hundred SACDs and a handful of DVDs. Maybe this is going to change some day but until then the DP-67 is certainly the best choice.

SUMMING UP:

Don't let them confuse you. CD is alive and kicking and will definitely be alive for a very long time to come, before it may perhaps be driven out by disks of higher resolution. This is fact and therefore you can't go wrong if you go and buy this magnificent CD player from Accuphase. I can guarantee you that you'll be happy with it and besides that, you'll always have the good feeling that your money was well invested, namely in a machine of which one of the concepts is longevity. Be sure that you'll be obtaining a device which even after many years will not lose its value. After all Accuphase don't build computers.