

Review of Lector CDP 707 Player, by Dominic Marsh and Lionel Payne, september 2017, on :



Lector 707 CD Player

The £4100 Lector 707 CD Player, here with the top level power supply, the PSU-7T, is made in Italy, has a valve output stage and a top loading transport. Dominic Marsh and Lionel Payne. put it through its paces.



Some say that the Compact Disc medium has had its finest day and streaming is where it's now at. I beg to differ and still prefer the sound (and to me, the consistent reliability) of the silver disc. My fellow reviewer Dan has abandoned CDs entirely and relies solely on the likes of Tidal and such-like for his source material. While I envy the access he has to an immense library of music to call upon, it wasn't pleasant watching the sheer angst on his face when only half of his total playlist was showing on screen and one channel kept dropping out of his system which was traced to a DAC connection apparently.

A good friend of mine also lost his entire music library when his PC took early retirement and the whole music library became totally inaccessible, so 7 months on from that and he is still rebuilding it. Sooner him than me, although I may grumble about getting off my fat posterior to swap CDs over, but that is infinitely more preferable to me than night after night of rebuilding an entire digital music storage system from scratch again.

And, despite the extraordinary levels of high resolution definitions and formats available over the streaming networks, the 44.1kHz bitrate off a silver disc still has a very strong pulse and is far away from drawing its very last breath.

With that kind of background driving my thought processes, it was so refreshing to be asked to review the Lector 707 CD player for Hifi Pig Magazine, instead of being tasked to evaluate yet another streaming device. Not that I really object you understand, but my favourite gripe is relying on battery power with mobile phones and tablets, while communicating with the PC which has constant mains power, is low on the list of priorities with streamers via WIFI.

Enter then the Lector 707 valve output CD player, designed and hand built in Albuzanno, Italy.



Construction

Surprisingly, this is a two box built affair, one box containing the transport, DAC and audio output sections, while there is a choice of two power supplies, the PSU3-T which tips the scales at 3kg, or the uprated PSU7-T which is a heavy full width box which contains a sophisticated and complex power supply section with an LED indicator panel, both cases being finished in high gloss black with optional gloss black or real Cherry wood side cheeks.

The player section has a top loading transport, with a slide open “drawer” which reveals the drive spindle and puck, which is small in size but contains 3 small neodymium magnets to clamp the disc to the spindle. By virtue of that top loading mechanism, there has to be plenty of room to insert and remove CDs to and from this player, so I can foresee this machine not residing inside a rack because of that, unless there is plenty of free space above for these actions. I housed this pair on the top shelf of my rack.

The DAC section comprises of two PCM-1704 R2R digital to analogue convertors with, digital filter selectable for 4 x or 8 x oversampling via the remote control, while the audio output is handled by 2 x 12AT7/ECC-81 valves.

The larger and much heavier PSU7-T power supply was supplied with the review sample. I am still not convinced about the blue LED display and switches on the front panel of the power supply, as when I switched any one of them to the OFF position the sound ceased. The manual isn't very clear in that respect either, save stating that if the LED is lit, the relevant supply rail is working. No kidding!

Price at time of review: £4,100 with the PSU-7T option.

Sound Quality

No matter what genre of music I threw at this player, it never once became wrong footed or confused, it just played it like it is with a rock solid steady and consistent power which wasn't brutish or overpowering by any means. In fact, you could listen for hour after hour and never be fatigued by the sound and some might interpret that by thinking it was dull, boring and perhaps a shade lacklustre, but not so, there was more than enough excitement to keep you enthralled and before you realised it the clock had advanced way past your regular bed time. I have owned players whose forte is to deliver an endless stream of explicit details which soon fatigues and you soon yearn for some warmth and musicality to relieve that constant barrage of dynamics and details, which in the short term is invigorating and energising, but let me say the Lector 707 is not guilty of, because it does have power and energy which never overcomes or overwhelms. It is always a very fine line to tread and the Lector followed it unwaveringly.

The sound just opened up and flowed with absolute ease from the speakers, fine details had acquired a polished refinement, presented in an endless stream of new found details, so it was no effort at all to hear all of the tiny nuances in the recording without having to strain to hear them. Bass too acquired a palpable firmness and solidity without any trace of boom or overhang at all. Drums and bass were immense in scale, yet under perfect control at all times. Of particular note however was the sound stage and imaging which really was holographic in every sense of the word and it was effortless in placing musicians and instruments into fixed points in space with a solid yet ethereal quality to them.

Bass timing was absolutely on the button, power and depth impressive, but with complete control and authority I have seldom heard from a CD player. The top end impressed in a similar vein and that was evidenced when I connected up my 'horror' speakers that show any deficiencies in that region very clearly indeed. The Mordaunt Short MS20 Pearl Edition speakers I have are armed with metal dome tweeters that are totally ruthless and unforgiving when it comes to high treble energy and it takes very little to provoke them into harshness and brightness, so I have a private shudder to myself whenever I introduce them into an evaluation session. Once again the Lector player showed that the top end treble can be expressive, sophisticated and under complete control.

My resident CD player sounds dry and almost analytic by comparison and even though it is equipped with a fistful of selectable digital filters, I could not find a suitable one to match the Lector despite cycling through all of them, that had the rich creamy warmth overlaid onto the music like the Lector player delivered with such sophistication and pure ease.

The acid test for me is how well this player stood up to my intimate knowledge of Fink's "Wheels Beneath My Feet" live album. The intro strikes on the Ride cymbal the drummer plays on track one called "Biscuits For Breakfast" is so convincing and just so realistic, as is the pounding kick drum that features throughout the entire album. Interestingly enough, the benchmark for true high fidelity for me personally is how almost tangible and very much lifelike how the rim shots sound on the Snare drum. There must not be any colouration at all from this instrument, a defined precisely voiced "tock" with each strike coupled with hearing the shell of the drum and finally the reverberation around the venue. This CD has been recorded in different venues throughout Europe during one of Fink's many tours so the venue ambience is different for each location and the Lector 707 CD player homes in on this like a laser guided missile and missing none of it, with each and every venue being easily differentiated. No "shooshing" sounds like bacon frying in a pan during the audience's applause, each audience member is an individual, clapping, whistling, cheering and cat calling enthusiastically all around you.

You can actually hear each individual string of the guitar playing during chords and riffs, you can even tell what the string is made from and what it was plucked with (Plectrum or fingers) from Fink's acoustic guitar playing and it felt rather smug to say "metal" and "plectrum" while the music was playing. When we talk about this level of fine detail, it might be crossing your mind reading this review that this amplifier is a bit explicit or somehow spot lit in its treble and midrange resolution, but be assured it isn't, as you can listen for hour after hour and it never fatigues despite the high quantity of fine details and nuances it is feeding you. If it did, I would have no hesitation at all in saying so.

Of course if the track "Sort of Revolution" hasn't got my toe tapping or in extreme cases joining in with the audience in clapping in time with the kick drum, then perhaps something is amiss, because it has that enthusiastic compelling energy inherent in the recording that gets me going, no matter how often I listen to this album.

Conclusion

If like me you are still unable to let go of the silver disc format and are looking for a CD player that is totally effortless and true to the sound recorded into the disc without shredding your ears, then this should be the CD player you should audition.

All very well singing the praises of it, but the question you must be thinking is; "Would this Dominic chap own one himself?". If I could afford it, then undoubtedly yes. It made my top end Sony player sound rather dry and soul-less by comparison and I dearly miss that ability to scour out the last drop of detail from my CDs with that rich vibrant overlay and without shrieking or squawking at me as some other high-end players have done. It isn't either the fact that valves are used in the audio output stage, as I have owned that type of player before, maybe it's the innate quality of the separate power supply, or perhaps that Lector have included the magical "Ingredient X" into the design, but whatever factor(s) are responsible for that final sweet sound, it certainly works and for me at least the sum was indeed greater than it's parts, which in an oblique way of saying it gets a very high recommendation from me, so I pass the Lector 707 over to Lionel Payne.

AT A GLANCE



Build Quality: Fit and finish is excellent on both the player and power supply. The switches and LED display on the power supply is more ornamental than necessary or factual.

Sound Quality: Very difficult to fault, in fact I couldn't find fault and it can stand being listened to for many hours without fatigue although dull sounding it isn't by any means.

Value For Money: With a price of £4,100.00 this pair isn't cheap, but I reckon you will be in no hurry to upgrade to anything supposedly "better". They are hand built and this also has an element in the pricing.

Pros: Quality build and peerless sound.

Cons: None.

Price:£4100

Dominic Marsh

Dominic Marsh in his review above has given a high recommendation for the Lector 707 CD player, so it has been handed over to a second reviewer, in this instance Lionel Payne, for a further evaluation and a possible “Outstanding Product Award” nomination.

Although I have one foot firmly in the “Vinyl Until I Die Club” I have to agree with Dominic’s sentiments about the merits of the simple Red Book Compact Disc. These days there seems to be a lot of people who are too ready to write them off, but I feel that there is a long life ahead for our circular 5 inch friends. It doesn’t seem that long ago that everyone was telling us to sell our turntables and vinyl as the medium was dead, and we all know how that worked out.

Personally, I have a vast collection of them and I don’t plan on giving them up any time soon. It’s a long time since I counted my collection and I would estimate it would be around 2,500 in number. If you take a conservative view of average cost per compact disc at, say £5, this would suggest I have paid a total well in excess of 10 grand for my collection. It then leads on to me asking myself how much could I justify spending on a CD player ? Hmmm ! £4100 is a lot of money for a Compact Disc player but the Lector CDP 707 accompanied by the PSU7T power supply is an extremely good player and worth every penny. Within half an hour of listening to the first CD I had handy I was left staggered by the extra enjoyment this player could provide. I was also left to consider how I could possibly raise the purchase price of £4100 ! Sadly unless my lottery numbers all come up I think it is a bit too high priced for me but selling a kidney did momentarily cross my mind.

The first CD in question was New Model Army’s Between Dog And Wolf and from the opening bars I was mesmerised. The sheer weight and attack of the drums in the opening track (Horsemen) had me pinned to my seat. However as the track developed there was no loss of detail further up the scale with the lead singer’s vocals perfectly clear and intelligible at front and centre while the backing singers floated in space deeper and left of centre. Guitars and other instruments all had their own space and place within the mix and everything came together to give a wondrous presentation.

Wanting to move away from my favoured indie rock I loaded the wonderful Fink Meets The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra CD in this top-loading machine, replaced the magnetic puck, shut the top-loading drawer and sat back. This hybrid/classical CD is often my reference disc to check soundstaging abilities and I wasn’t left wanting. The CDP707 has the wonderful ability to create wide and deep soundscapes without losing the rhythm and drive of a track. It is said by many detractors of CD sound quality that it is cold, clinical and too sharp-edged. I would suggest to those same detractors that they take a listen to the Lector CDP707 as it would more than likely blow their minds. This player has a wonderfully warm and natural nature to its presentation.

I would go as far as saying that the Lector CDP707 is the most analogue sounding CD player that I have ever heard. I’d love to have one !

Lionel Payne

