

Cambridge Bullseye

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR 840C CD PLAYER **\$2499**

Cambridge Audio is on a roll these days. Last year I had the pleasure of the British company's awesome Azur 840A integrated amplifier, itself brimming with proprietary CA technology. Then this year it was the turn of the pocket battleship Azur 640 HT Receiver, and once again the proof was definitely in the pudding as it produced excellent results for not a huge wedge of moolah.

Now Cambridge Audio has produced a statement CD player to match the 840A amplifier, and it is literally packed with innovation.

With most medium to high end CD players able to upsample music data to 192/kHz, the Azur 840C goes one further and offers upsampling to a whopping 384kHz. It's called Q5 upsampling, and has been developed with Anagram Technologies (a Swiss audio technology company that also manufactures Class D digital amplifiers, among other products) to enable SACD/DVD-A clarity and dynamics from your bog-standard CD collection.

Befitting the flagship aspirations of the 840C, both balanced XLR and normal RCA connections populate the rear panel, and interestingly there are also two digital inputs – perfect for connecting other digital components to upgrade their sound quality. It's a feature high-end manufacturer Wadia has built into its CD players for years, and I can't think of another company that has this facility.

The Azur 840C is fully compatible with Cambridge Audio's multi-room system, and can also be controlled via its RS232 computer interface.

The build quality is quite superb. Solid aluminium front and side panels have been combined with a heavy steel base and vibration-absorbing feet to produce an acoustically inert chassis; it's the sort of attention to detail I have become

accustomed to from Cambridge Audio.

There's no point in having all this technology and construction quality if it sounds like a piece of junk, though, so after a lengthy run-in period (a very long period!) it was time to put the pedal to the metal, metaphorically speaking.

Hooked up to my tank-busting Korsun V8i integrated amp and giant-killing Wharfedale Opus 1 speakers, it was time to find out.

It's really a player I feel has no signature of its own to add to the music; in fact it allowed the music to ebb and flow in a most natural fashion. Pocket Symphony from French über-cool electronic gurus Air had a blend of exquisite detail and involvement without being either too clinical or warm. The player seemed to be able to walk the line with its ability to be neutral, neither too warm-sounding nor too brash and clinical. Dynamics were very impressive from The Killers' Sam's Town, the 840C managing to craft a silk purse from a sow's ear with its ability to make this harsh recording very listenable.

So yes, it's another winner from the Cambridge Audio stable. Some criticism has been pointed at this player for its long break-in period (up to two weeks solid), but the Azur 840C rewards this patience with a superb all-round performance on all types of music. Hugely recommended.

■ GARY PEARCE



DETAILS ▼



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SPECIFICATIONS

- Adaptive Time Filtering (ATF) asynchronous up-sampling technology converting 16-bit 44.1 kHz CD data to 24-bit 384kHz
 - 32-bit Analog Devices Black Fin DSP
 - Dual differential DAC configuration
 - Two digital inputs allowing up-sampling and playback of other sources
 - Digital outputs allow recording of up-sampled audio
 - Control Bus In/Out, IR emitter in and RS232
- DIMENSIONS: 115 x 430 x 360mm (H/W/D)
WEIGHT: 8.5kg

PROS

- ✦ Does everything right musically
- ✦ Built like a tank

CONS

- ✘ Give me a month to think that through

VERDICT

Another success story from the masters of affordable hi-fi

Aesthetics	90%
Performance	95%
Features	94%
Functionality	92%
Price Value	92%
Overall	

