



Ray Of Light

RAYSONIC CD128 CD PLAYER \$3299



Quite some time ago, I made a secret pact with myself. I would forever stick with mid-fi audio gear, rather than bankrupting myself chasing the elusive high end. This has been a very rewarding ethos, and more than a few of my mates with more expensive audio gear have commented on the results I've been able to achieve with my more modest budget.

Over the past few years, however, there has been a steep decline in the cost of gear that would have most of us drooling like uncontrollable buffoons (*Baboons?* - *Monkey Ed*), and this has meant a giant leap in my own aspirations regarding all things hi-fi.

Why this lengthy preamble, I hear you ask? Well, I have, thanks to Canadian newcomer Raysonic, spent the last two weeks familiarising and delighting myself musically with a prime example of the value for money available in hi-fi gear these days. So without further ado, it's my proud pleasure to introduce to you the CD player we have all been waiting for - The Raysonic CD128.

Looking for all the world like a machine with an \$8000+ price tag, this unbelievably beautiful valve CD spinner is yours for a mere \$3299. And I mean mere, because the performance of this luscious aluminium-clad wonder really had me checking the RRP.

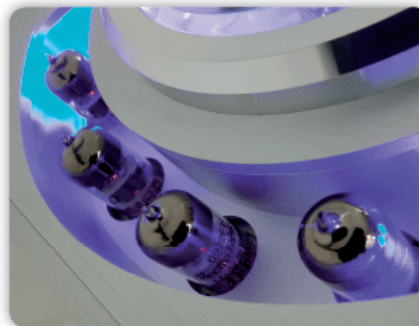
Belying its price tag is the fantastic build and finish; most players in this price bracket use sheet steel casing, but the thick aluminium casework of the CD128 is practically bomb-proof. Four 6922 Russian valves are located in a semi-circular trough behind the top-loading CD mech, and as this is backlit with a blue light it provides a spectacular lightshow when played at night with the lights off.

Eschewing the normal tray arrangement used in most players, Raysonic offers a top loading transport: just lift off the transparent perspex cover, remove the puck and place the CD on the spindle. Reverse steps 1 and 2 and you're up and away. Once the play button is pressed, the combination of the valves, Burr Brown 24/96 bit processors and beefy power supplies conspire to produce the most beguiling sound this side of five grand.

Yep, it's a real beauty all right, and one wonders how it can be produced for the asking price.

After replacing my usual CD player, I had the unenviable (snigger) task of quite a few nights of listening to find out if the CD128's beauty was more than skin deep. Valve devices have a reputation for a rosy, soft presentation, but tracks from The Killers' *Sam's Town* had true dynamics and a lovely, uncoloured mid-band. And it definitely does drive the music along in an excellent fashion; this Raysonic is certainly no shrinking violet when it comes to the boogie factor. What aren't lost in the presentation are subtlety and warmth, and tracks from Stevie Wonder's classic *Innervisions* really captivated, with a portrayal that took me right back to '73, with Stevie's voice - and his Moog synthesizer - captured in all its analogue glory. It was great stuff indeed.

I've reviewed some fine products this year - both hi-fi and home theatre - but the Raysonic CD128 has them all beat. Why? Well, it's a player that sounds like it's worth \$6000, looks like it's worth \$8000, and managed to satisfy all my musical sensibilities to boot. End of story. ■ GARY PEARCE



CONTACT:

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SPECIFICATIONS

- Burr Brown PCM1732 24/96 D/A conversion
- HDCD decoding
- Sony KSS213Q CD transport
- Russian 6922 valves x 4

DIGITAL OUTPUTS:

Coaxial (x 1), optical (x 1)

WEIGHT: 11kg

DIMENSIONS: (WxDxH) 440 x 310 x 64mm

PLUS

- ◆ Killer looks
- ◆ Killer sound quality
- ◆ Killer value

MINUS

- ✦ Credit card is already maxed out!

VERDICT

This stunning Raysonic sounds just as good as it looks

Aesthetics	95%
Performance	92%
Features	90%
Functionality	88%
Price Value	88%
Overall	

