



Technology Music Way of Life

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Bryston BCD-1 CD Player

Canadian (Sound-) Tradition

This component comes from Canada, to be more precise, from Peterborough in Ontario. Canada - In my younger years I neglected, for whatever reason, to emigrate there, to this fascinating country with its ethnically divergent population and its magnificent outdoors. That's how life goes... Now I have the assignment to describe a CD player of Canadian origin - at least I get that pleasure.



Functionality

The first CD player from this "noble manufacturer" which is also highly reputed in professional circles, has a businesslike restrained appearance, its design clearly rejecting any kind of trendy superfluous folderol. The chassis measuring 43 x 8 x 29 cm.

(W x H x D) incorporates an ano-

dized front panel, and is optically dominated by the drawer front of the integrated Philips transport with its three beam laser. The name "Bryston" is engraved in large letters on said drawer front, and clearly confirms who makes the music here. Seven small, but highly precise and versatile, pushbuttons control the most important functions, for example "Play", "Next", etc. - it seems pointless to describe this in detail, after all everyone knows what the respective captions mean. The left side display with its green dot matrix is small, but clearly readable even from some distance, and it allows many individual configurations, for instance the remaining time for the track playing. The remote control is of premium quality: a massive aluminum enclosure with buttons from the same material, robust, built to last forever, it controls all functions of the CD player, and it can also control the operation of Bryston pre-amps and Bryston integrated amplifiers. No need for the dreaded game of search, "which remote control for what?"

A truly nice feature, we are back with the CD player itself again, is the notification "End of Disc", which seems to take on a personal aura as if to say "Take out the CD and replace it with a new one."

The rear panel corresponds in its orderliness with the front. From left to right (viewed from the back) the Bryston BCD-1 CD player offers unbalanced analog outputs and balanced XLR analog outputs all with gold plated jacks. There are also digital outputs in order to connected to an external D to A converter, both fiber optics (Toslink), SPDIF (RCA) as well as AES-EBU via XLR, all of these jacks are also gold plated (of course not the Toslink). By means of the "Trigger in Socket" the CD player can be remote controlled for "Stand By", which is of interest to professional studio users. Finally there is an "RS232 port" in order to upload new software, but that's not part of my world... Furthermore toward the right side is the jack for the power cord. The cable connections are swiftly made thanks to the clearly logical, and self explanatory, jacks, and soon music can be heard. But before we begin listening, let us consider a few of the construction details.

Technical Concept

Let's take it one at a time:- The elaborate power supply includes an efficient dual toroidal transformer which provides ten regulated voltages for supplying every important circuit function, filter capacitors, as well as ceramic and film capacitors for buffering and filtering; plus some additional filtering measures.

The jitter-free Philips transport sends its data to a Cirrus Logic CS-4398 double D to A converter, which can read data up to 24 Bit/192 Hz, and can reach dynamic values up to 120 dB through its differential output, all this with minimum inherent distortion, which lies in the likewise academically interesting area in the value of 1/1000 per cent. In order to achieve an absolute minimum of jitter the Bryston BCD-1 CD player is equipped with a high-precision master clock which assures perfect synchronization between the transport and the D to A converter.

The analog signals are then processed through four-step complementary-symmetrical Class A output stages, whose balanced and unbalanced outputs are compatible with the high level inputs of the Bryston BP26 preamp. In order to keep the signal paths as short as possible, this circuit is contained on a highly integrated special epoxy resin (FR-4) printed circuit board, and assembled with the newest SMT (Surface Mount Technology), and the output jacks are directly soldered to this board. It is also worthwhile noting that the electrical digital outputs are galvanically decoupled with studio transformers whereby problems with connections to external D to A converters and other input components are prevented.

The Bryston BCD-1 CD player is built entirely by hand, and each unit undergoes extensive tests as well as a 100 hour "Burn-In", which is why any kind of user run-in time becomes unnecessary:- unpack, position, connect, and listen to music. The fact that the BCD-1 uses extremely low current consumption, i.e. .84 Watt in stand-by mode, 7.2 Watt in switched-on mode, and 9 Watt while playing a disc should also be mentioned. This is equally unusual as well as exemplary!

The Practical Advantages...

of the described technical complexity:- The BCD-1 CD player pleases with its affectation-free musical performance. Connected to the extensive equipment of my sound studio via the balanced analog output connections, it proved itself a reliable informed "collaborator", and also as a working tool in the positive sense of the word - "open drawer", "pop in CD", "start", "listen", and "enjoy." Furthermore if one craves to do so, one can confidentially undertake precisely accurate analyses of the actual playing sound carrier, because the Bryston CD player distinguishes

itself by its enormously clean and artifact-free reproduction, as well as providing equally compliant hour long stress free listening, even during closer sound examinations of a recording, which can certainly not be realized with every CD player. Here the professional heritage of the Bryston Company comes to the forefront, and **if the cliché "sounds analog" wouldn't be so worn-out, I would gladly use it here.** Let's make it simple:- The Bryston BCD-1 CD player always reproduces what the sound carrier has to offer, completely naturally and effortlessly, and I could not discern, even when employing the strictest of brutal criterions, any kind of limitations in reference to wide spatiality, bass scaling, and "up and down" positioning. Soundwise the CD player is unquestionably in the "Top Class", although here and there I discern a minimal tendency toward warmness, whereby it remains questionable whether this might not fall under the heading of "configurative reaction." However this might be - I want to demonstrate the Bryston BCD-1 CD player to you in action by means of a few musical examples I had available.

Sound Sequences

The CD "Muget ihr schauen" (Elster Silberflug Group, CD/9202, "Publisher of the Play People") conveys the listener into the time of vagrants and itinerant musicians, and when Walther von der Vogelweide's "Palestine Song" rings out, the low tone sound boards in the back of the room help to produce a down-to-earth idiosyncratic substantially bassy interpretation, which always induces a peculiar frame of mind in me, as if I were making a journey back into the 12th century... Comparing this interpretation with the one that the "Cappella Antiqua Bambergensis" on CAB-09 (Title 12) presents of the same work, the definition of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure imposes itself quite automatically, namely "language in flow", la parole", and the language as a resting system "la langue." Here folkloric, there scientifically based and validated... well, when a technical component prompts such thoughts while listening, then its reproduction must be free of question marks!

The Bryston BCD-1 CD player shines in regard to the replication of recorded acoustic space information, because it has no limitations. Those who don't believe this should obtain the CD "The best of" from the Group Inti Illimani (WEA 857383885-2) and they should not be deterred by the unimaginative title. It consists of a 19 "takes" compendium from the works of the Chilean formation, partially reissues from old master tapes, and partially newer recordings free from the "loudness race", although to a certain extent borderline recording levels are reached, whereby this CD offers astonishing spatiality. The last selection "Bailando, Bailando", in which the musicians combine Andean styles and instruments with saxophone and jazzy rhythms is especially exhilarating... It's something one must hear! The Bryston CD player precisely documents the wide space of the recording venue, which is also true for the post-processing filtering of the titles, partially from the seventies, one to eight:- At 14 kHz a boost of +2 dB was undertaken, which can be confirmed by comparing the LP to the CD.

Thereby the player has unquestionably qualified itself for the grand master of the Baroque, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). Since it was additionally noted that it provides the important musical flow, that it connects the whole together, it becomes obvious to confront it with the "Brandenburg Concerto No. 5", because when with Bach the "beat of the heart", as the composer called it, does not agree, the reproduction quickly falls off the mark. Especially with Bach the rhythmic flow, uniformity, and differentiation capability are imperative, if his highly developed works are to sound imposing to the listener. "The English Concert" under the leadership of Trevor Pinnock (Cembalo) presents, quite simply said, on DGA 410 501-2, a Bach work in a congenial recording from the recording engineer Hans-Peter Schweigmann, for which surely no equal will be found. Especially the first movement

(Allegro) with its unusually long harpsichord solo, which requires enormous proficiency from the interpreter, I have so far never heard like this... when the complete ensemble finally precisely enters like one man, it unquestionably takes everyone's breath away. Precise spatial location, extensive width, the entrancing outline and total depiction of the beautifully sounding old instruments, all of this becomes matter of course for the Bryston DCD-1 CD player. Deep insight with flowing portrayal... again and again such and similar words come to mind. It appears to be a characteristic of this CD player to keep an eye on this totality coupled with tonal coherence, whereby it performs quickly, with high-definition, as well as with dynamism, and thus the tangible and palpable reproduction becomes genuine enjoyment. Sure, the much cited end of the flagpole nevertheless still lies a tad higher, "a bit better whenever" - minutia, microscopic granules... however we don't want to lapse into anankastic nitpicking here, because Bryston's BCD-1 CD player satisfies in its entirety.

In a Nutshell

Whoever is looking for a CD player with all around harmonious reproduction properties, with a classical transport, with problem-free operation, and with a reassuring five year warranty, should by all means consider the Bryston BCD-1 CD player. This CD player convinces with its musical flow and with its colorful acoustic pattern, and likewise with its excellent reproduction of recorded spatiality, therefore it can be unhesitatingly recommended - "end of story."

WINFRIED DUNKEL

Translated from the German by Peter Ullman