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EXPOSURE 2010 S

Exposure gambles on its own CD drive – we think it wins

The typical Exposure smart but functional slab case gives little away, but there is one significant and unusual feature to this player – Exposure has commissioned its own CD transport. The majority of specialist CD players these days are based on CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drives, but those can be a pain to interface and are not necessarily optimised for audio in any sense. Optics and pickup are by Sony, but congratulations are in order to Exposure for having the courage to push the boat out on the rest. All the same, the familiar gremlin of mechanical noise is present in small – but not vanishing – measure.

The feature set is simple and dedicated to traditional hi-fi rather than multiroom installations. You get both flavours of digital output (the electrical one on a BNC socket, which is only a benefit if you use an appropriately-terminated cable) and audio outputs, and of course you get a remote control. You'd better not lose this handset, as the front panel buttons give no way of searching within a track.

Pet peeves aside, it's a nice enough machine to use and its very well assembled. There's nothing remarkably fancy inside; some components are downright unfashionable in audiophile circles, but performance suggests much careful attention has been applied. A particularly large toroidal transformer feeds a brace of well-regulated power supplies.

SOUND QUALITY

Chalk up another hit for Exposure, apparently. After the success of the 2010 S integrated amp in HFC 262, this matching CD spinner had a lot to live up to and – lo and behold – it did. It didn't quite outperform the best of the group, but then it's the cheapest player taking part in this test and it certainly didn't sound like it.

The word "enjoyable" cropped up several times in listening notes (both from blind and sighted sessions), which says a lot about the player's way of engaging the listener. It was



liked on more specific grounds too, including bass (again) and detail. One listener, for whom it is clear that instrumental definition and separation is a priority, commented that it doesn't quite distinguish between instrumental lines as well as the best of 'em, and this is indeed justifiable. However, even that picky customer was happy enough to agree that what it makes of each instrument is a very convincing picture, in detail and in outline.

Intriguingly, one listener asked, "was this louder?" in his notes. It wasn't (and seeing that comment we went back and checked our volume settings), but that may well say something about the player's happy knack of communicating intimately. It offers good imaging with some of the best depth we've heard around this price, very sweet treble and an extremely even-handed midrange. It also seems exceptionally catholic in its music tastes, being completely at home with everything from solo piano to glam rock to jazz ballads, and perhaps the most assured of the group with high-energy pop or dance material.

Our initial 'solo' review of the 2010 S in HFC 261 extolled its musical enthusiasm but noted some lack of refinement. There's truth in that statement, but the player rarely gets too carried away. It's an engaging Best Buy. **HFC**

VERDICT

SOUND >>> 87%	A spirited performer that really gets to the heart of the music, though not ideally suited to the detail freak or anyone seeking an overtly relaxing listen. The cheapest in the group, but also one of the best.
FEATURES >>> 80%	
BUILD >>> 86%	
VALUE >>> 91%	

89%
OVERALL SCORE

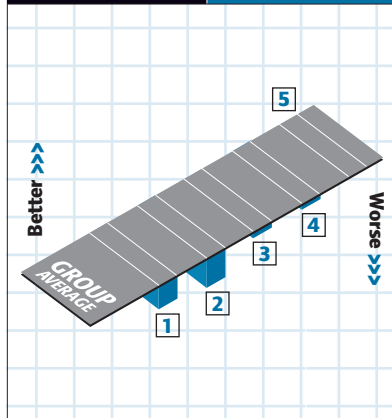


LAB REPORT

The newest incarnation of the established 2010 continues Exposure's fine lineage of machines. It has a lot of commonality with its predecessor in terms of internal layout and front-panel design. When it comes down to measured performance, consistency is what this machine is about. Distortion figures vary by only 0.01% across the audio band, creeping up slowly and smoothly with frequency. Frequency response is ruler-flat from 20Hz to 10kHz, and then rolls off gently approaching 20kHz. Linearity measurements are also consistent, showing a fairly high-precision DAC.

In terms of digital-domain measurements, the machine performed decently – less than 3.7ns of clock jitter on the S/PDIF output, with clock accuracy better than 2.3Hz. The DAC's reconstruction filter appears very decent as well, with the highest-level digital artifact being better than 55dB below the 20kHz-fundamental test signal.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >> -20%
- 2] Jitter >> -25%
- 3] Linearity >> -5%
- 4] Dynamic range >> -5%
- 5] Digital filter >> 0%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Max output level	2.0V	2.01V
Distortion (1 kHz @ 0dBfs)	–	0.066%
Signal-to-noise ratio	>100dB	105.66dB