

Oracle CD2500 MkII (£10,000)

Renowned for its beautifully crafted turntables, Oracle's compact disc players are equally stunning design statements. This latest Canadian creation is no exception
 Review: John Bamford Lab: Paul Miller

One of my less endearing traits, of which I have several according to my long-suffering wife, is that I'm inclined to show off now and again. So when chatting to an acquaintance on the telephone recently I simply couldn't resist dropping into the conversation that my living room was currently 'cluttered' by two outrageously expensive CD players: the £8000 Wadia 381i [see *HFN* July '09] and the new £10,000 Oracle CD2500 MkII.

Moreover I was going to have to spend several days listening to music on them, using the familiar Wadia as a point of reference, and subsequently write a critique on Oracle's new baby. Such is a reviewer's lot. While I might have preferred to do something else – meet up with friend at the pub, perhaps? – I simply *had* to listen to this gorgeously crafted CD player costing £10,000. Whether I wanted to or not. If I was looking for sympathy I sure didn't get it, as you might imagine.

IF LOOKS COULD KILL

Redolent of Oracle's space age looking record players, that had some of us going weak at the knees when we first saw them 30 years ago, the Canadian company's compact disc spinners are visually striking to say the least. This '2500 MkII model follows the form of Oracle's CD2000 CD Transport. At the rear, analogue outputs (both single-ended RCAs and balanced XLRs) replace the ST glass optical and AES/EBU digital outputs which featured on the '2000 transport, the sole digital output on this player being S/PDIF on a BNC connector.

While calling the CD2500 MkII an integrated player is entirely accurate, it boasts the construction of a three-box player with its disc transport linked

via ribbon cable to a separate housing underneath. This contains the control electronics, D-to-A converter and output stages. A remote power supply unit, in a rather plain black box that is not entirely befitting of the main unit's sculptured magnificence, connects with a 15-pin D-Sub cable.

There's no question that the '2500 does look utterly magnificent. The finish of the elaborately machined aluminium parts, coated with polyester lacquer to seal and preserve the appearance, is quite impeccable.

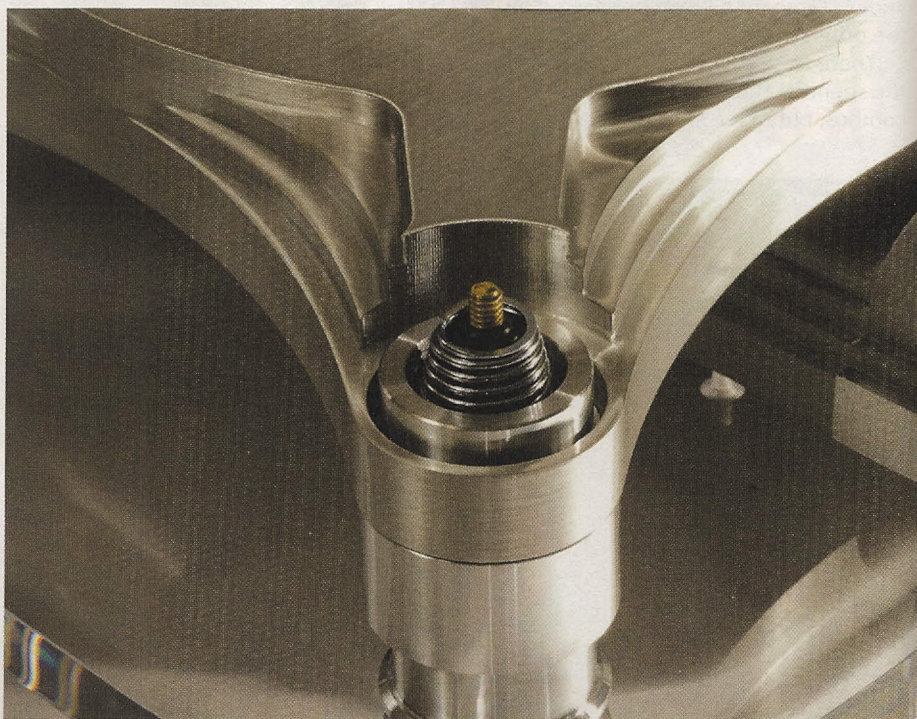
DOING MANUAL LABOUR...

If you've never lived with a manual top loading CD player I would advise you consider it carefully before blindly taking the plunge. The thing about compact disc, love it or loathe it, is that unlike vinyl records it is extraordinarily simple to use and there is nothing fragile to get easily damaged. You can entrust friends and family members – even your

kids – to play CDs on your beloved hi-fi system, can't you?

Not so with the Oracle '2500. For a start, the aluminium top cover, lined on its underside with black felt, needs to be carefully lifted off to reveal the disc mechanism inside. You'll need somewhere convenient, an adjacent shelf perhaps, to 'park' this cover while avoiding contaminating the felt lining. A disc is held in place with a magnetic puck to reduce 'chatter', designed with a 'tacky' urethane washer attached to its underside to create a slight vacuum with the disc. But as you lift the puck to remove it in order to change a disc, the CD comes with it... for a moment at least, until it suddenly lets go. You need to be prepared for this or else your CD will end up rolling across the floor.

And it's imperative to keep the puck's urethane washer scrupulously clean too, so you mustn't place it face down else contamination will spoil its efficacy. Oracle supplies a bottle of Brilliance



RIGHT: Inside the housing of each suspension tower is a conical spring surrounding a core formed of Delrin [see Oracle Vibes, right]. Once set up, no adjustment is required