



cleaner and lint-free cloth with each player for regular cleaning of the puck's underside washer.

Are you going to let your kids anywhere near this Oracle CD player, then? Er, no, probably not. What about the fabulous Wadia high-end player that's been residing in my rack for the past few weeks? Do I let my teenager daughter play CDs on that? Yes, why wouldn't I? She puts a disc in the loading tray, as with any silver disc player she's ever come across, and presses Play.

There's a final operational quirk that needs mentioning. No doubt you'll be aware that when you close the tray on a conventional player the disc spins for a few seconds while the player reads the CD's table of contents (TOC). Consequently when you settle into your favourite armchair you can either press Play to start listening from the beginning of the disc, or go directly to any desired track in an instant, because the player has already studied the disc's contents and knows precisely where to go. Again,

not so with the '2500. Each time you load a disc you must first press a 'reset' button on the player – or stab the Standby button on the remote controller twice in quick succession – in order to instruct the Oracle to read the new disc's TOC. Only after this can you press Play. Yes, really.

### RITUAL CAMPAIGN

Hey folks, this is all part of the ritual. Call me cynical if you will, but I can't help suspecting that this has been deliberately designed in to add to the player's cachet. It's arcane. And it's unnecessary. Still, this is not the first slightly quirky manual CD player ever to be designed, nor will it be the last. And is the operational ritual worth it? Well, it takes but an instant to hear that the CD2500 MkII sounds simply sumptuous. It's got energy and drive in abundance, with plush, textured bass that never fails to convey the drama of large orchestral

**ABOVE:** Striking 'futuristic' design and immaculate finish reminiscent of Oracle's record players makes for a bold visual statement in any audio enthusiast's system

works or the vigour of stirring rock and pop productions.

Referencing one of the discs auditioned recently on the delightful Wadia 86 1i, David Sylvian's haunting 'River Man' from *Gone To Earth* [Virgin CDVDL 1] was terrifying in its intensity.

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Perhaps a little less 'airy' than with the Wadia, the Oracle painted a darker picture of the electronic soundscape. Robert Fripp's treated guitar and 'Frippertronics' appeared less ethereal and more vital to the piece, while the thunderous sampled bass notes crept across the carpet in ominous fashion. Mel Collins' mournful soprano saxophone sounded like it was just about to burst into tears.

It took little time to determine that the '2500 is less delicate sounding than the Wadia 38 1i while being altogether more visceral. You'll take your choice and pay your money. The Ensemble Modern's *Plays Frank Zappa* disc [BMG 59842-2] proved that the Oracle was equally as adept as the aforementioned Wadia at conjuring up images of the musicians performing at the end of my room, treating me to an intimately private concert. Interestingly, with the Oracle it was like observing the players performing in a different space, with a drier acoustic. Instruments concomitantly sounded more sharply

## ORACLE VIBES

Based in Ontario, Canada, Oracle Audio Technologies created a sensation in the UK 30 years ago when its skeletal turntable first appeared on these shores. At a time when a Linn LP12 was considered the height of luxury, the Oracle cost twice as much and looked more than twice as pretty. Its extreme design of acrylic and polished aluminium had a sophisticated suspension system and featured a slightly 'tacky' platter mat together with a record clamp.

Oracle has always made a great deal of its vibration isolation methodology, not only in its design of analogue players but for its silver disc spinners as well. The main chassis assembly of the CD2500 MkII has four suspension towers. Inside each tower is a conical spring arrangement with an elaborate concoction of Sorbothane and felt to control resonances and damp vibration, the pillars themselves inside the aluminium housings are formed of Delrin. This is a hard-wearing polymer invented by DuPont back in the 1950s, first used to make cutlery handles, among other things. Delrin's resistance to abrasion and fatigue has made it ubiquitous in gears and cams today. Delrin was also used to form the hubs in cassette tapes, by the way.