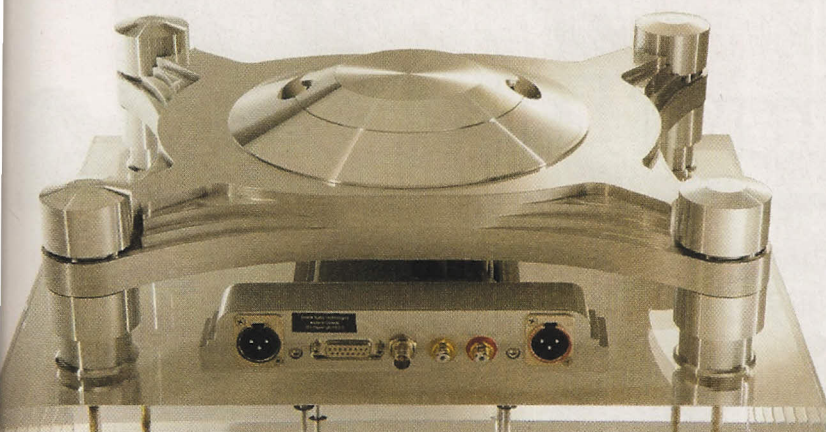


## CD PLAYER



**ABOVE:** Rear view of the CD2500 MkII shows single-ended RCA and XLR balanced analogue outputs, plus S/PIDF digital output on a BNC connector

focused; the musicians' performance appeared more commanding of attention.

It took precious little more time to fall in love with the sound of the Oracle. It's not that it is fabulous at revealing previously unnoticed details in recordings. Rather I would argue that it appeals more to the heart than the head, thanks to the energetic manner in which it describes a musical event, drawing you into the music and compelling you to pay attention.

### FORTHRIGHT ENERGY

Listening to Robert Fripp's distinctive guitar playing on Sylvian's album had led me to dig out King Crimson's *Starless and Bible Black* [E'G, EGCD 12] from way back when. Crikey, it's a while since I've been so gripped by my replay system. The Oracle '2500 had me lashing the air in unison with Fripp, Wetton, Bruford *et al* as 'The Great Deceiver' let rip at a hundred miles an hour with its multiple layers of thrashing guitars and electric violin.

Later on in the album the plaintive 'The Night Watch' saw me playing air guitar with abandon as Fripp's solo twisted and weaved around the lyrical melody lines. Call me an old hippy if you will, but I don't mind admitting that the subsequent flight of mellotrons sent a shiver down my spine.

Not that the Oracle always worked its magic. The title track on Paul Weller's *Wild Wood* [Go! Discs 828 513-2] was a little

too dry, the rather thick and 'closed-in' recording quality of this track rendered lighter by the Wadia and sounding better for it. Nevertheless there's a forthright immediacy to the sound of the '2500 that rarely fails to set the pulse racing. So feed the Oracle a less stodgy diet and more often than not its energy will grab you by the earlobes and demand that you be impressed. Certainly I was.

Having put them off for the past few weeks I'm due to join a couple of neighbours this weekend in a local hostelry. Doubtless I'll feel guilty if I don't drag them back to my listening den afterwards for a quick blast of this beautiful Oracle. 'Cos once the importer has taken it away they'll only ever have my description of its sound to rely on, along with our photographs. And that'll never recreate the thrill of having heard it. ☺

### HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

Stating the obvious, as with any manual top loader there's a ritual involved in playing a CD on the Oracle that will not suit everybody. That aside, much like Oracle's turntables, the CD2500 MkII looks and feels absolutely exquisite. Sound quality is in the top league too, with an opulent, earthy quality that imbues intensity to large orchestral works and really drives rock music at full throttle. Fabulous!

Sound Quality: 88%

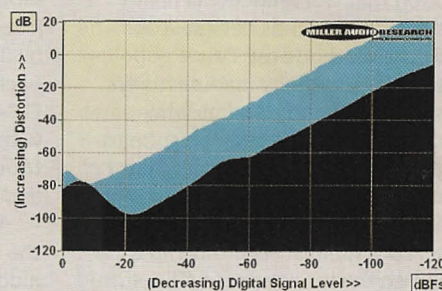


## LAB REPORT

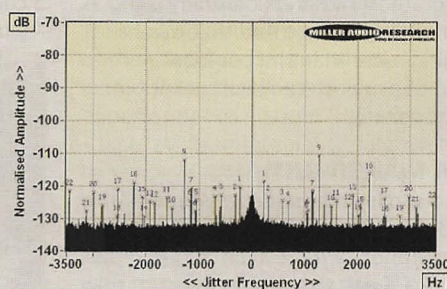
### ORACLE CD2500 MkII (£10,000)

Supporting a high quality Philips CD-Pro II linear-tracking mechanism atop one of Oracle's instantly-recognisable four-point suspensions makes for an inspired piece of industrial design, but the technical performance is largely determined by other factors. These include the choice of Crystal's CS4390 DAC, a venerable 24-bit/48kHz performer from over a decade ago. Oracle uses an outboard DC power supply of its own design, connected to the CD2500 MkII via an umbilical, and this helps keep any breakthrough of 50/100Hz noise – either on the noise floor or jitter spectrum – to a minimum. Nevertheless the 89dB A-wtd S/N ratio is still about 1-bit shy of the 16-bit standard thanks to an increase in 'white noise' through mid and treble. Ironically this can often produce a subjectively pleasing 'dithering' effect with otherwise harsher-sounding CDs!

Peak output is about +2dB over the 2V standard at 2.7V (beware any quick A/B dems) and distortion comprises 2nd-5th harmonics, a strong 3rd pushing the total to 0.035% at full range but just 0.002% at -20dB [see dip in black trace, graph 1 below]. As this is an older noise-shaping DAC, there's both an increase in ultrasonic re-quantisation noise and distortion at HF [see blue trace, graph 1 below]. Jitter is low enough at 250psec but comprises numerous 'spikes' distributed across the noise floor [see graph 2, below]. Low frequency jitter is minimal and the frequency response looks both very flat and powerfully extended. Stereo separation is also well maintained at >80dB. Readers are invited to view comprehensive QC Suite test reports for the Oracle CD2500 MkII CD player by navigating to [www.hifinews.co.uk](http://www.hifinews.co.uk) and clicking on the red 'download' button. PM



**ABOVE:** Distortion versus digital signal level over a 120dB dynamic range using 16-bit CD data at 1kHz (black) and 20kHz (blue)



**ABOVE:** High resolution jitter plot showing a broad spread of very low-level sidebands

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Maximum Output Level	2.67Vrms
A-wtd S/N Ratio	88.9dB
Distortion (1kHz, 0dBFS/-30dBFS)	0.035% / 0.0065%
Distortion & Noise (20kHz, 0dBFS)	0.048%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	+0.02dB to -0.04dB
Digital jitter	245psec
Resolution @ -100dB	±0.3dB
Power consumption	21W
Dimensions (WHD)	425x150x363mm