

Naim CD5si | **CD player** | £995

Stripped-down but brimming with energy



Naim's rapid flow of new streaming products makes it easy to forget that the company still makes CD players.

The new CD5si is arguably its best entry-level model to date. It's a thorough reworking of the long-running CD5i – and to that end there's a new transport. The mechanism was chosen for improved consistency and longevity, and is still mounted in the company's unusual swing-drawer arrangement.

We like this manual system. It feels well engineered and nicer to use than the flimsy motorised trays than most other players tend to opt for.

Other changes include upgraded digital-to-analogue circuitry, a more accurate clock and better analogue filtering. All in all, that's a lot of work for a mere update.

And even a short listen suggests the effort has paid off; this is a great sounding CD player. The CD5si sounds like an explosive ball of energy. It attacks tunes such as Jay Z's *Run This Town* with enthusiasm, delivering punch, power and exceptionally surefooted handling of rhythms. There's plenty of detail on offer, and the ability to keep it all in place as the mix gets denser.

Scores a musical bullseye

Switch to Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* and the CD5si responds with dynamic subtlety and a crisp rendition of leading edges. Musically it's spot-on, conveying scale and authority as well as anything we've heard at this price level. Some folk might prefer a more relaxed presentation,

USE IT WITH

Heed Obelisk si

A terrific amp that works wonderfully with the Naim. Detail, dynamics and timing – the Heed gets it all spot-on. It can be upgraded, too.



but for us the Naim's highly charged enthusiasm is welcome.

Features are minimal. The CD5si doesn't have digital outputs or any means of being upgraded. For most companies a lack of upgrade path is normal; for Naim, it's odd.

Still, when it comes to performance the CD5si can hold its own against tough competition from Audiolab and Cyrus. It's been a long time since anything has managed that.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Dynamic, punchy and exciting sound; lots of detail; great with rhythms

AGAINST No digital outputs; unusually for a Naim product, no upgrade path

VERDICT The CD5si is as musical as they come at this price. It's a stripped down affair, though

Also consider

Audiolab 8200CD
£800 ★★★★★



The 8200CD has dominated this market for the past few years, and rightly so. It lacks a little of the Naim's excitement, however.

Sansui WLD+201LX | **Network audio player** | £350

Network player hits most of the right notes

It seems every manufacturer has its own take on what constitutes a perfect network audio player. Sansui's is to treat its device as a tuner, adding to the network music playback and internet radio, analogue and digital tuners to create what it calls a 'WiFi Internet/DAB+/FM Tuner', the WLD+ 201LX.

It has inputs for wired and wireless networking, a single antenna connection, digital and analogue outputs and a USB port for memory devices containing music. The front panel is dominated by a large display which you could just about read across a smallish room if you have good eyesight.

As well as the bundled remote, there's an iOS app, Sansui Libretto, to control the WLD-201: it's free, but at the moment only

designed for iPhone and iPod Touch, and looked a bit rough round the edges when blown up on the screens of our iPad mini and third-generation iPad.

In fact, there's a quite a bit of 'at the moment' about the Sansui: it's currently limited to a maximum of 24-bit/48kHz content (so the kind of high-res music slowly becoming available is off-limits), it doesn't play Apple Lossless files, and that front-panel USB socket, while fine for 'thumb drive' devices, isn't compatible with iPads, iPhones or even iPods.

It's rather light in the bass, if tight and rhythmical, and a little brittle and splashy in the treble, meaning that it tends to emphasise sibilants in speaking or singing

USE IT WITH

Sansui SAP201V

Sansui's partnering amplifier has an agile and clear sound, and delivers plenty of detail.



voices, and can make cymbals, for example, a little less crisp than they should be. They sizzle rather than sting.

Unfortunately, that means it can highlight the deficiencies of low-bitrate audio, but things get much better when you use higher-bitrate compressed audio, or uncompressed or lossless content.

Overall, then, a versatile – if currently slightly flawed – piece of kit.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Sensibly priced; solid build; versatile

AGAINST Libretto app can lose contact with player; limited to 24-bit/48kHz; struggles with gapless playback

VERDICT Not without its faults, but worth a look if you listen to lots of network content

Also consider

Pioneer N-50
£500 ★★★★★



More expensive than the Sansui, but you can find it for under £400. The Pioneer both looks and sounds the part.

