

Platine J. Sikora

Le Standard Max

Wadax Studio Player
Audio galactique

Yamaha True X 90A
LA barre de son !

Keith Jarrett
80 ans !
Discographie sélective



L'or japonais
Koetsu Urushi Wajima



SOURCES - TRANSPORT CD/CD/SACD PLAYERS

MIMETISM CD422 T

Vincent Guillemin

Founded in 2004 by William Andréa and Yvan Coderey, Mimetism presents itself as a company with Swiss precision and French creativity, which imports a large part of its production and remains relatively unknown in France and even in Europe, despite an extensive and constantly evolving catalog of electronic products. To discuss it for the first time in VU^mètre, we have chosen to start with the CD422 player, specifically testing its best-selling CD422 T version, which stands for Top Loader.

The CD player is not dead! Especially for music lovers who have built up large collections over many years and sometimes, like us, have entire walls or bookcases filled up with these little gray discs. But while the market in Japan remained strong until recently thanks to SACDs and often high-performance but very expensive players, the European hi-fi market has remained focused on the CD format, which is why French manufacturers such as Atoll and Mimetism also remain committed to this format.



ORIGIN

France

PRICE

€ 7.000

DIMENSIONS

450 x 130 (155) x 400 mm

WEIGHT

18 kg

SAMPLING RATE

PCM : p to 192 kHz/24 bits

DISTORTION + NOISE (THD + N)

<0,005 %

SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO (SNR)

>100 dB

DIGITAL INPUTS & OUTPUTS

Input : 1 x USB Audio

Outputs : 1 x coaxial S/PDIF ; 1 x AES/EBU

ANALOG OUTPUTS

1 x RCA ; 1 x XLR

Capable of playing only CDs, as we have just seen, the Mimetism CD422 was first released in a version with a front-loading tray, which is still available in the catalog at a price of €5,800, with the option of adding a USB input to the DAC for €150. With this digital input, the CD422 T is, as its manufacturer states, a top loader, meaning that it uses the same TEAC mechanism, but has been thoroughly redesigned and placed on top of the chassis on a 6 mm thick aluminum plate, which makes it much more resistant to vibrations. Decoded by a two-channel SRC4392 asynchronous sample rate converter with a dedicated ultra-low-noise power supply, the signal extracted from the CD is then sent to a Wolfson WM8741 chip, which is more than capable of decoding the 44.1 kHz sampling rate, as it can handle rates of up to 192 kHz/24-bits and DSD64 with files directly sent to the DAC. Preferred over the Sabre ES9018 chip used in dual mono in the Mimetism DA 372 DAC, this Wolfson chip, as we will see in the “sound” section, provides great fluidity and a sound quality typical of what you would expect from a CD player.

Built around a 32-bits PIC32MX795F512 microcontroller to manage all of the player’s digital features, the CD422 T comes standard with the Amanero USB Audio module, capable of retrieving files up to 384 kHz from a streamer or computer and sending them to the internal DAC. A large, carefully filtered 100 VA toroidal transformer provides powerful current throughout the device, whose chassis on four 2.5 cm feet, with a solid aluminum front panel, displays all the information needed for playback on a clear blue LED screen. Separated on each side, there are six buttons, as on all Mimetism electronics - except for power amplifiers, which have too few functions for this -

and there are no engravings or indications to tell you what they are for. You will have to memorize them to use them intuitively. Otherwise, a remote control allows for more complete and much simpler use. The first button on the left is used to skip tracks (the return function is only available via the remote control), the second to choose between CD or USB playback, and the third to turn the power on. On the right, from top to bottom, are the Play/Pause, Stop, and Display functions, the latter allowing you to dim the screen brightness in three levels.

On the rear panel, the entire right-hand side is devoted to power, with a mains socket and a switch, while on the left are the XLR and RCA analog outputs, followed by two coaxial S/PDIF and AES/EBU outputs for independently using the CD transport and sending it to another DAC, or USB Audio for integrating an external source directly via its DAC.





THE SET UP

Delivered in a beautiful, very sturdy wooden crate with adequate foam padding to prevent any damage during transport, the Mimetism CD422 T is a substantial object weighing 18 kg, to be placed on a top shelf, ideally in an audiophile cabinet designed to prevent vibrations. With a height of 15.5 cm including its feet, it can also be used inside a shelf, provided that there is at least 22 cm of space to safely remove the transparent top cover.

Received new in its T version, i.e. top-loading, sold by the manufacturer in a ratio of 4 to 1 compared to the drawer version, the CD422 T was first run in for more than 50 hours before testing began. Very quickly, the rotation of the playback mechanism became very quiet, and only the movements of the playback head on the rail remained audible when listening very closely. Integrated into several hi-fi systems, the device was mainly listened to as a CD player on its two analog outputs, with a preference for the XLR output, and we recommend that you only leave one pair of cables connected at a time, otherwise you risk splitting the signal and losing gain. In other tests, we sent the transport signal to different DACs, and used its USB input from

different streamers, including our Luxman NT-07, connected by an excellent Nordost Tyr USB cable.

THE SOUND

As mentioned in the technical section, although the DAC uses Sabre conversion chips, the brand's co-creator William Andréa opted for a Wolfson chip for his CD422 and CD422 T versions, in the same way that Atoll integrated an ES9038PRO chip into its DAC300, but remained faithful to Burr Brown for its streamers and CD players. With this choice, which is clearly not insignificant, the French engineers have identified a color, or at least a style, in CD listening that does not require precision at all costs, since the files are limited to 44 kHz/16 bits, but rather fluidity and timbre quality.

With this in mind, the CD422 T combines a mechanical section that has been extensively treated to reduce vibrations with a highly flexible DAC, each of which brings an undeniable charm to the listening experience. As a pure transport, even the mechanics slightly mute the sound compared to that of a Mark Levinson 5101, just as they purify it and give it a lot of volume compared to that of an Atoll DR200 transport. Much better shielded

thanks to its aluminum plate, the CD422 T allows the signal to be free of interference and gives it great ease.

Sent back to the aforementioned Mark Levinson, the transport signal can come out with even more precision than with the Mimetism's DAC, but its Wolfson chip is more ductile and gives the soundstage more volume, while assembling the elements with simply obvious coherence. Compared to the same track played back from our excellent streamer connected via USB to the DAC of the CD422 T, the CD playback has less details, as the sampling rate is lower and the resolution is limited to 16 bits, compared to 24 bits on the Hi-Res file. However, the fluidity and timbres never let the CD down, with an ease of listening that makes the Mimetism player a delight.

After listening to all kinds of music for many hours, including CDs and Japanese SHM-CDs, the CD422 T proved to be agile across the entire bandwidth with a slightly muted sound, which gives it a color typical of what you would expect from high-quality CD playback. Thanks to the Wolfson DAC, the treble is less bright than most converters with Sabre chips, at the slight expense of coloration in the very high frequencies, but with the advantage of never being harsh and never causing overemphasis, again resulting in constant comfort. At the other end of the spectrum, the bass is perfectly focused and highlights the quality of the chassis and mechanics, which are free of any parasitic vibrations. With Schönberg's Gurre-Lieder, for example (Abbado DG & Boulez Sony recordings), the differences in spatialization and color of the instruments are clearly apparent on an open, airy stage that reproduces the music in a very lively manner.

ISVARNA LE PHÉNOMÈNE HYBRIDE





OUR CONCLUSION

The first model tested from Mimetism, the CD422 T promises more pleasant surprises with the amplifiers and integrated amplifiers from the French brand with Swiss precision. Although its input to the DAC is limited to a USB Audio port, this is perfectly sufficient to make the player the main source of the system, thanks to the integration of a high-quality network transport. Furthermore, this superior version of the CD422 offers mechanics worthy of certain CD transports of equivalent price, and for €7,000, the player can also be considered as

a pure transport if your hi-fi system already has a high-performance DAC.

But for its original function, which is to provide hours of enjoyment of CD music by simply connecting to an integrated amplifier or headphone amplifier via its analog outputs, this Mimetism offers a listening experience and fluidity that are extremely appealing. For all of this, we would like to give it our highest recommendation for this enjoying CD 422 T. ■