



Cambridge CXC/CXA60

Few manufacturers have come to encapsulate the budget end of the hi-fi market quite like Cambridge Audio (as it used to be known). In the eighties it made exotic high-end kit, but reinvented itself in the early nineties with some superb affordable CD players and DACs, and since then it hasn't looked back. The products have traditionally been a little mundane looking, but they have consistently outperformed many price rivals. This new combo – sporting the new shortened 'Cambridge' monicker – attempts to keep that excellent sonic

The combo gives more detail than price rivals, but in a smoother way

pedigree, but go the extra mile in terms of styling. It's certainly a big step up from what we're used to from the brand, aesthetically. The CXC is a dedicated CD transport, and it pairs with the CXA60 amplifier.

The CXC is said to be optimised for audio CDs – an important point in a world of optical drives designed to read DVD-ROMs, adapted for hi-fi use, and uses the company's own special S3 servo, which is said to give very low jitter. The design is neat and it has an aluminium fascia and pressed steel case, damped to cut resonance. The

matching CXA60 surfs the zeitgeist of modern amps, sporting three digital inputs, plus a BT100 Bluetooth dongle (£70) – which feed the integral Wolfson WM8740 DAC chip running at up to 24-bit/192kHz resolution. It's a Class AB design pushing out a claimed 60W RMS per side via an Alps volume control, and has a low-flux toroidal transformer to help it along the way. Analogue inputs are standard too, of course, including a 3.5mm socket on the front.

Sound quality

Despite being only slightly more expensive than Yamaha's CD-N301/A-S701 CD player/amp combo that it went up against back in HFC 401, there's a step up in performance, and it's a considerable one at that. Fascinatingly, even hooking the Cambridge CD transport up to the Yamaha amplifier improves things noticeably, but when the Cambridge amp is added, the system really begins to soar.



DETAILS

PRODUCT
Cambridge CXC/CXA60

PRICE
£300/£500

ORIGIN
UK/China

TYPE
CD player & integrated amplifier

WEIGHT
CXC: 4.7kg
CXA60: 8.3kg

DIMENSIONS (WxHxD)
CXC: 430 x 85 x 315mm,
CXA60: 430 x 115 x 341mm

FEATURES

- Quoted power: 2x 60W (8ohm)
- CXC inputs: 4x RCA line; 1x 3.5mm minijack; coaxial; 2x Toslink; USB
- CXC DAC: Wolfson WM8740 chip

DISTRIBUTOR
Audio Partnership

WEBSITE
cambridgeaudio.com

REVIEWED
HFC 401

Essentially, the sound is bigger, punchier and much more vibrant. The Yamaha is enjoyably smooth, but lacks a whole layer of dynamics; the percussion on UB40's *King* is dramatically more accented via the Cambridge, and you can hear rim shots jumping out of the mix that other cheaper designs miss. This all makes the music flow so much better, and come alive. Even vocals are discernibly better and more tuneful.

Moving to the brush but melodic sound of Cocteau Twins' *Lorelei*, the combo manages to give more detail than more affordable rivals, but in an altogether smoother way. Despite this, the texture of the instruments is far more realistic; you can hear the chiming sound of those early digital synthesisers better. The same goes for Coldplay's *Speed Of Sound*; this pairing seems able to unpick the mix and throw loads of detail out, yet it is smoother and more immersive too. The sound of Herbie Mann's flute finally rings true on *Summertime*, too. This is set against a far deeper and more spacious soundstage, with instruments located much more accurately in the recorded acoustic. **DP**

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★ **LIKE:** Propulsive, musical sound; fine styling; decent build; good facilities

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Nothing at the price

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★ **WE SAY:** This great-value combination punches way above its price point

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL

