

TEST

Accustic Arts
Player III

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2023

100+
Luxury-Klasse

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Accustic Arts Player III

PREMIUM-PERFORMER FOR CD UND HIRES



New
Gold Edition look,
proven top drive

**Superb
presence and
precision**

Noble appearance in shiny gold and brushed aluminium: In the new Gold Edition, the Accustic Arts Player III reveals an alternative attractive look – yet remains immediately recognisable as a component of the Lauffen-based high-end manufacture.



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Premium-Performer for CD und HiRes

Accustic Arts updates the noble symbiosis of tradition and modernity: The new Player III retains the audiophile CD sampling with excellent front-loader drive as well as the proven upsampling technology, but now enables the playback of HiRes files up to PCM 384 and DSD512 – and surprises in the Gold Edition with a completely fresh and elegant look.

With the Player III, the Lauffen-based high-end manufacturer Accustic Arts reaffirms its statement for the CD. The silver disc is still a non-negotiable part of the music library for countless hi-fi fans and audiophiles – and that's why there is still a demand for excellent sampling and conversion components today. Accustic Arts offers these both in its reference series, from which we have already tested the Player II, and in its top series, from which we had the Player I as a guest. It is the predecessor of the Player III – and this kinship is obvious: The current model also offers the impressive appearance that distinguishes all components of the Swabians. The solid aluminium enclosure exudes an immense sense of quality with its noble brushed, micro-polished and anodised surfaces, high-gloss controls and panels, and superb build quality.

It is rounded off by artistic ceiling millings: The openings in the shape of the company emblem – underlaid with a perforated grid – allow heat to be supplied with the utmost grace.

New Gold Edition look, proven top drive

Nevertheless, the Player III offers a completely new appearance, as it is the first representative of the fresh Gold Edition: Accustic Arts now also offers its components with gold-plated buttons and applications – right down to the gold plaque on the front. This elaborate and expensive Gold Edition look is even more refined when the aluminium body is finished in black, as in our test model. Wow! Thanks to our experience with the Player I, we know that behind the lower – now shiny – gold cross panel is the CD drive drawer. Here, Accustic Arts relies on the tried and tested and offers a premium drawer drive from the specialist StreamUnlimited for playing the silver disc and reading out its data. It is designed solely for the CD and exclusively for audio use. That means it runs very



The top of the Player III is adorned with the attractive company emblem, finely milled from the perfectly brushed and anodised aluminium. In the Gold Edition, the perforated grille underneath is coherently gold-plated – as are the screws lining the edge.



The front-loading drive operates behind the lower panel. Two flanking guide rails increase the already great stability of the carriage and promote smoothness and quietness when moving in and out.

smoothly and is mounted in a vibration-decoupled manner. This minimises mechanical vibrations – which are detrimental to the reading accuracy of the laser beam – and thus enables clean scanning.

Haptic experience

The drawer is also optimised and amazingly stabilised: Two flanking metal rods ensure that the per se robust slide made of aluminium-ABS composite material is guided cleanly and free of any play and thus moves in and out perfectly smoothly. The robust drawer – reinforced at the front by the metal panel – then finally comes to rest with a rich sound when it is pulled in. Top! To be able to experience this, simply operate the large, massive button to the right: Turning and pressing selects and activates the CD functions open/close, start, stop and track jump forward and backward. With every handling, we experience the wonderful weightiness and at the same time wonderful ease of movement of the shiny gold button. This haptic experience is also offered by the left button, which func-



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Model:	Accustic Arts Player III
Product category:	CD player/DAC
Price:	12,000.00 euros
Guarantee:	2 years
Versions:	- Housing: Silver / knobs and trim: Chrome - Housing: Silver / knobs and trim: Gold - Housing: Black / buttons and trim: Chrome - Housing: Black / buttons and trim: Gold

Vertrieb:	Accustic Arts, Lauffen Phone +49 7133 97477-0 www.accusticarts.de
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Dimensions (HWD):	130 x 482 x 380 mm
Weight:	11,2 kg
Inputs (digital):	1 x USB 2.0 (type USB-B) 2 x S/PDIF electrical-coaxial (Cinch) 1 x S/PDIF optical (Toslink)
Outputs (analogue):	1 x balanced (XLR) 1 x unbalanced (Cinch)
Outputs (digital):	1 x S/PDIF electrical coaxial (Cinch) 1 x S/PDIF optical (Toslink)
Maximum sampling rate/ resolution (inputs):	- USB: PCM 384 kHz/32 bit, DSD512 - S/PDIF: PCM 192 kHz/24 bit
Playable media:	CD, CD-R, CD-RW
Input data formats:	- WAV, FLAC, ALAC, AIFF etc. - DSD
Total harmonic distortion (THD+N):	< 0,0001%
Crosstalk attenuation:	< 106 dB at digital 0 dB

Grading

Overall rating:	100+
Class:	Luxury class
Price/performance:	reasonable



The right-hand dial is used to operate the CD functions on the player. Operation of the large, gold-plated full-metal knob by turning and pressing is a haptic delight.



The source selection knob is used to switch between CD playback and the four digital inputs by turning it. Pressing, on the other hand, switches the Player III on and off.

tions as a source selector. The Player III can play much more than just CDs. It offers a portfolio of digital inputs whose data is converted by the on-board DAC and made available in analogue form - more on this in a moment.

Frugal remote control, discreet display

In addition to this close-up operation concentrated on two noble buttons, the Player III also allows command from a distance. Accustic Arts supplies a simple plastic remote control for this purpose. It offers the functions mentioned above and allows direct track selection via the numbered buttons. The other buttons for repeat, programmability or random playback can be disregarded because the Player III does not support these functions. The time button, on the other hand, is useful: When pressed, we can choose between the elapsed time of the song currently playing, the remaining playing time of the track or the entire CD. The easy-to-read display behind the upper mirrored panel of the Player III lets us know this. The single-line display also provides information about its current activity and the currently active source with blue LED segments. In addition to the CD, this can be a file that is fed in via one of the inputs.

Fresh converter section for four digital interfaces

Four digital inputs are available: two electrical-coaxial and one optical S/PDIF interface and a USB 2.0 port for connecting a laptop, computer or streamer. The USB interface acts asynchronously and thus independently of the clock of the source being played - enabling significantly more stable and error-free data transmission and processing. The more accurately the data is read, the more faithfully it is reconverted into a musical signal. Here, the new Player III is up to date thanks to a fresh transducer section: It now processes HiRes files up to PCM 384 kilohertz/32 bit and DS512. The digital section and the analogue section are separated from each other in the housing of the Player III for the benefit of a trouble-free transformation of data into music. This minimises hum, noise and buzzing as well as mutual interference between the modules. For the same reason, the laser control, display control, digital signal processing and D/A converter section are powered by two separate power supply sections. They are each equipped with a potent 25 volt amp toroidal transformer with high delivery capacity and reserves - which is also conducive to performance.

The Player III offers an extremely tidy appearance at the back - and at the same time has a number of connection options.



Upsampling for clean signal processing

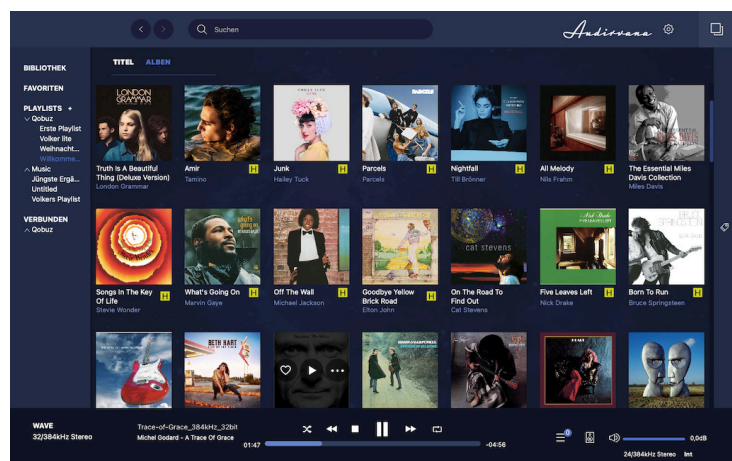
For the benefit of sound quality, Accoustic Arts utilises up-sampling in all players of both the Top and Reference series: The PCM signals are brought to a sampling rate of 384 kilohertz and a resolution of 32 bits. Increasing the sampling rate reduces a problem of data processing: the accuracy deviation of the sampling frequency as well as the transmission clock. Due to the fluctuations, the data is sometimes not delivered and processed at the right time. This bad timing, called jitter, changes the reproduced music signal. The higher sampling rate also allows the shape of the continuous analogue signal to be reconstructed more accurately. The analogue signal finally recovered in this way is now revealed by the Player III in several ways: A balanced and an unbalanced output are available for connecting an amplifier. If you have a component that needs a digital signal, or if you want to use an external DAC, the Player III has both an optical and a coaxial S/PDIF output up its sleeve.



Under the company emblem, the Player III presents two elongated, mirrored panels. They only reveal their function during operation. Behind the top bar is the single-line display, which shows the important information with LED segment displays.

Superb presence and precision

Drummer Lorne Entress starts solo with gentle strokes on the closed hi-hat, followed by a rim click, where one end of the drumstick hits the edge of the snare – while the other end of the stick and the playing hand dampen the snare head. Even this short, repetitive pattern is delivered by the Player III with super presence and precision. We hear the snare's metal frame, the hi-hat's double cymbal with its characteristic percussive hiss – and after only two seconds we already have an idea of the room and the placement of the drums, because the reverb reflections are perceptible with terrific fine resolution. Now the guitar and keyboard enter, and here too we experience this presence and grip of the instruments. This is especially true for the guitar: In Kevin Barry's melodic phrases we hear every touch of playing and fingering hand, hear every slide, every bending and every ornamental vibrato on the metal strings – and also register Barry's subtle variations in velocity.



Via USB, files from the hard disk, the NAS or a subscribed music service can be played, preferably with an audiophile player software. As a DAC, the Player III converts HiRes files up to 384 kilohertz/32 bit and DSD512 into music.

The Accoustic Arts Player III in practice

We first connected the Player III to a perfectly matched partner via the unbalanced output: The amplifier is the Accoustic Arts Power III Phono. It drives a pair of loudspeakers Audio Physic Avanti speakers. We start, of course, with the CD operation, insert Mighty Sam McClain's silver disc "Give It Up To Love" into the drawer of the drive, again appreciate the quiet work of the transport and the smooth engagement of the drawer. The reading process is quick, as is the starting process – and already with the first seconds of the title track, the music fills our room with euphony. There are sound chains that immediately deliver a coherent, sonorous reproduction – and that is the case here. The player makes the audiophile start with its CD scanning, data readout, conversion and reconstruction of the music signal. Here it delivers a statement in terms of richness of detail right at the opening – yet the song begins with a minimalistic approach...



On the input side, the Player III offers three S/PDIF inputs and a USB port. The player also passes on the digital data: An electrical and an optical S/PDIF interface are available for this purpose.

Relaxed, calm and natural

This reinforces the impression of freshness and liveliness that we perceived right from the start with the drums: The reproduction has a wonderful dynamic. Now the bass kicks in with warm, deep and space-filling quarter notes, on which drummer Entress kicks his bass drum with pinpoint accuracy. That is perfect timing – and that is exactly how we hear it in the playback. We experience this absolute coherence in the entire instrumental interplay. As a result, the reproduction has an immensely laid-back, calm and natural feel. This is also due to the outstanding spatial imaging: We hear a band that is generously staggered in both breadth and depth. Each musician can develop

completely freely without obscuring or obscuring another instrument. The keyboard benefits ideally from this: Bruce Katz plays completely song-serving filling chords on "Give It Up To Love" – yet we hear his ajoutations, the added octave notes or the characteristic iridescence of his Hammond B-3 organ, varied in intensity.

Performance plus via XLR

With Mighty Sam McClain's input, the combo is then complete: The frontman is in the foreground, placed just right in the stage structure – and when we close our eyes now, we have the feeling that the guys are playing the song right in front of us, we are there live. Could it be any better? Yes. We switch from unbalanced to balanced signal transmission, connect the Player III and the amplifier via XLR cable, compensate for the slightly higher volume – and experience an increase in all disciplines. This begins with the perceptibility of space via reverberation and reflections and extends to the greater materiality of the instruments and their gain in presence: Lorne Entress' cymbal and snare hits, for example, have an even better assertiveness and – like Kevin Barry's now more immediate-sounding string hits – are even more dynamic. Even the bass drum kicks sound more confident. Mighty Sam McClain also wins: His extremely charismatic singing is even more gripping and intense.

Orchestral richness of detail

New source, different music: We connect our laptop to the USB port of the Player III and play the first movement of Mozart's Violin Concerto in G major, K. 218, from our server in DSD128 HiRes quality. Violinist Marianne Thorsen recorded the concerto with the TrondheimSolistene – and here we also enjoy this absolute coherence and naturalness, this calmness and relaxation of the reproduction. The opening orchestra has a fabulous spaciousness, we experience a body of sound in which we can discover and listen to the instruments and instrument groups quasi individually. Again, we benefit from this richness of detail, also with regard to the room acoustics: Eyes closed, and immediately we are sitting in Selbu Church in the Norwegian county of Trøndelag, where the recording took place. We also keep our eyes closed right away: So



Actually, a simple plastic remote control is supplied with the Player III. Accoustic Arts provided the optional noble metal remote control for our test, which, like the Player III, is made of brushed aluminium.



The output of the analogue music signals is optionally possible via the one balanced XLR or one unbalanced Cinch connection.

Experience without borders

... which we can fully enjoy in this solo cadenza – as well as the sublime playing of Marianne Thorsen: We hear every bow stroke, every glassy harmonics, which the Norwegian elicits from her instrument in the most beautiful purity – every trill, every interpretative nuance of the melody lines and phrases played sometimes with gentle melting, sometimes with rubbing hardness in staccato. This is pure music – and it is delivered first and foremost by the Player III. This sinking into the music also succeeds with the artificial sound worlds of Yello: Via Qobuz we stream the superbly produced track "Till Tomorrow", which focuses on the world-class trumpeter Till Brönner. The dynamic opening promptly makes us wince, after which the journey of discovery through the sounds and samples of the Swiss sound tinkerers begins – the infinite beyond of their sound cosmos and Brönner's trumpet playing floating in it. This proves to be an experience without limits, also thanks to the Player III: We have long since left the here and now behind us.

Conclusion

The Accoustic Arts Player III also shines in its fresh version with the clever recipe for success, the noble union of tradition and modernity. Visually, this is achieved by the new, extra-noble Gold Edition design, which enriches the design options. Technically, this is achieved through the proven audiophile CD playback including upsampling technology and the now enhanced HiRes capability: In its function as a pure DAC, the Player III allows playback up to PCM 384 and DSD512. Acoustically, the Player III thus inherits qualities for which Accoustic Arts is famous: it shines with a high degree of purity, calmness, coherence and clarity, the reproduction scores with excellent spatiality, outstanding presence and plasticity. The exquisite accuracy and precision enable impressive dynamics, which can be experienced in a wonderful freshness and liveliness of the music reproduction. Thus, the Player III impresses as a premium performer for CD and HiRes.



The Accoustic Arts Player III in the test: Here it plays together with the matching Accoustic Arts Power III Phono integrated amplifier.

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