



Far from creeky



Simplicity is an admirable virtue, opines **Richard Black**, as he considers the performance level of Creek's new Evolution 2 CD player

For less than the price of the Evo 2 CD, you can buy a universal disc player that handles all the various flavours of digital discs, reproduces moving and still pictures as well as audio and generally makes this machine look a bit lacklustre. So what's the point? If you didn't already know the answer, you probably wouldn't even be reading this magazine, but there's more to it than simply knowing that the player has been optimised for one task alone. Just before reviewing this, we had some time with a Blu-ray (etc.) player and there were times when we could cheerfully have heaved it out of the window. Too many options, you see!

Get on with it!

Perhaps one day some kind of ultra-flexible (computer-based?) system will know instinctively what to do, but until then, there's a lot to be said for having a single-purpose player that just plays CDs. It loads discs faster than any SACD player (5-6 seconds), has the usual basic transport functions and, er, that's it. Practically all digital music discs are CDs anyway, and SACDs will play in a CD player, just not in high-res.

There's nothing to set up, just the usual audio leads to plug in to the

usual sockets, though you can use a DAC if you want, or connect a digital recorder.

Cut above

It's clear that a significant portion of the budget has gone on making this player a smart, desirable piece of kit, rather than just another faceless black box. The front panel is thick, solid aluminium, while the top is made of steel.

Nor has Creek stinted on the internals, which include a good-quality modern DAC chip (one of a few changes from the original Evolution model) and two different types of op-amp, each selected for its precise application.

Passive components are high-quality, too, while the power supply is based on a relatively large transformer. The Evolution system remote control is a cut above your average with a metal top-plate.

Beauty from inside

Of course, a player can offer all the looks and ease of use in the world, but if it sounds unpleasant or boring it's an ornament at best.

What we really liked about this player was not its exterior, but the beauty it consistently brought out from inside our favourite recordings. It's a trait we've found before in

DETAILS

PRODUCT:
Creek Evolution 2 CD

ORIGIN:
UK/China

TYPE:
CD player

WEIGHT:
6kg

DIMENSIONS:
(WxHxD)
430x70x340mm

FEATURES:
• Single unbalanced
analogue output

• Electrical S/PDIF
digital output

• TOSLINK digital
output

• Dimmable display

• Evolution system
remote control

DISTRIBUTOR:
Creek Audio Ltd

TELEPHONE:
01442 260146

WEBSITE:
creekaudio.com

Creek equipment, a highly convincing way of playing music without fuss or artifice, but with honesty, commitment and more than enough detail to convince and beguile any listener.

It's a potent combination, though one that may not always get the quickest sale in a dealer's dem room, as it takes a little while to make its mark. For instance, we tried a well-loved orchestral recording of some Rachmaninov, which seemed more immediate and dramatic on another CD player. As the track progressed, however, it was the Creek that kept our attention with a carefully graded build-up of tension, as the composer intended, while the other player seemed to have given its all near the beginning and was less successful at keeping our interest.

Lots to like

In terms of basic tonality it's hard to criticise this player, though to be picky one might suggest that its bass doesn't quite have the reach of a few upmarket alternatives. Treble is lovely, clear and open with lots of detail, and the midrange seems highly neutral. Stereo imaging is excellent, with width well delineated and depth unusually specific. It's hard to buy a bad CD player these days, but this one stands out in its price range as particularly fine. ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL
★★★★★

LIKE: Smart, desirable-looking player with lots of detail present in performance

DISLIKE: Bass doesn't outstrip rival players

WESAY: Tonal quality is excellent, especially in well-made recordings; very good value

