

TEST

## Accoustic Arts Player I

**lite** Testurteil  
2021

**96/100**  
Referenzklasse

[www.lite-magazin.de](http://www.lite-magazin.de)

CD Player/DAC Accoustic Arts Player I

HIGH-END SOUND ARTIST  
FOR HIRES AND CD

MOST NOBLE  
OPERABILITY

Premium drive with  
optimised precision



*Noble appearance in flashing chrome and brushed aluminium: the Accoustic Arts Player I is immediately recognisable as a product of the Lauffen-based high-end manufacture.*



## CD-Spieler/DAC Accoustic Arts Player I High-End Sound Artist for HiRes and CD

**Player I nobly combines tradition and modernity. Thanks to its excellent drive, the frontloader provides audiophile sampling of the CD. And CDs are still an integral part of the music library in many living rooms. Equipped with converter and upsampling technology, it also acts as an excellent DAC for HiRes files in PCM and DSD. In the lite test, the "Player I" showcased its sound artistry.**

Following Player II from the reference line, the "Player I" now represents the little brother from the top series. It offers its most noble conversion tools and sets a statement for CD. The data platter will surely stay several years more within our media portfolio. Thus, those Bits still require an excellent and accurate treatment. Like his big brother, Player I lives up to this promise with an impressive appearance. Accoustic Arts used finely anodised, brushed surfaces for the housing. Large, shiny control buttons make the "Player I" a dream in chrome and aluminium. The craftsmanship is impeccable as well. The high-end manufacturer from Lauffen, Germany, is renowned for this outstanding quality of materials and craftsmanship. The Player I underlines this by the design highlight: an artistically milled company emblem adorns the top of Player I. A perforated grid protects the openings, which serve to dissipate heat.

### **Premium drive with optimised precision**

Unlike the "Player II", the "Player I" is a frontloader. A premium drawer tray by specialist Stream Unlimited picks up CDs. The design enables exclusive audio playback, while the vibration-decoupling allows for clean scanning. Mechanical swings would impact the accuracy of the reading laser. Also, Accoustic Arts optimised the transport: Two stabilising metal rails flank the drive tray. Those guarantee a stable movement while sliding in and out. The editors were very impressed by the rigidity of this system. But you first have to discover this drawer: On the front of the "Player I" you only see two elongated and mirrored panels in the centre. After turning the device on, the upper one turns out to be a display, so the second one has to house the tray, but how do we get to see it?

### **Most noble operability**

The "Player I" does not feature any unattractive switches and buttons. The unit is operated solely via the two distinctive control knobs. The left one acts as a selector for different sources. The "Player I" is far more than just a CD player and offers several digital inputs. I come back later to that. Once you press the knob, the display comes to life. This way, you turn the "Player I" on - and by holding it longer, it turns off again. The knob on the right offers the func-



Artful ornamentation. Finely milled out from the solid metal, the company emblem resides upon the "Player I".



The right-hand dial is responsible for operating the CD functions on the player. The operation is a haptic pleasure. Here you can also see the superb quality of the brushed and anodised aluminium housing.

tions for the CD player fraction. Here are the options: Start, stop, skip, forward and backwards as well as the opening of the disc tray. You select the desired function by turning the knob and activate it via a firm press. Finally, the disc tray opens. A nice feature, colleague Maier expresses an admiring "That is awesome!" during the internal editorial demonstration. Using the massive knobs, you instantly feel their comfortable weight.

## Standard remote control and concealed display

Alternatively, and from a distance, the provided remote control performs different operations. It is a simple plastic standard remote control, but it serves this purpose well. It features all of the functions mentioned before. Furthermore, it enables for direct selection of CD tracks via numerical pad. Via the skip button, you can reach titles further away. Programs, random play or repeat offer no function as the "Player I" does not give this functionality. The time button informs about elapsed time or remaining playtime of the track or CD realised by the excellently readable display behind the upper mirrored cover. The blue segmented LED reports about the activity of the "Player I" and the selected source. The Accustic Arts Player I can handle fresh HiRes files and play the good old CD. It can also act as an independent digital-to-analogue converter.



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<b>Modell:</b>	<b>Accustic Arts Player I</b>
Category:	CD player/DAC
Price:	8.400,00 Euro
Warranty:	2 years
Versions:	Silver, black
Distribution:	<b>Accustic Arts, Lauffen</b> <b>Telefon +49 7133 97477-0</b> <b>www.accusticarts.de</b>

## Equipment

Dimensions	
(H x W x D):	130 x 482 x 380 mm
Weight:	10,8 kg
Inputs (digital):	1 x USB 2.0 (Type B) 2 x S/PDIF electric-coaxial (RCA) 1 x S/PDIF optical (Toslink)
Outputs (analogue):	1 x balanced (XLR) 1 x unbalanced (RCA)
Outputs (digital):	1 x S/PDIF electric-coaxial (RCA) 1 x S/PDIF optical (Toslink)
Maximum sampling rate/resolution	
(Inputs):	- USB: PCM 192kHz/24bit (internal upsampling to 384kHz/32bit), DSD128 - S/PDIF: PCM 192kHz/24bit
Playable media:	CD, CD-R, CD-RW
Input formats:	- WAV, FLAC, ALAC, AIFF etc. - DSD

## Included

Accustic Arts Player I, Standard remote control SRC IV, 2 Batteries (AAA), Power cord (2m), User manual, CD-ROM (USB driver, installation manual), Spare fuse, Certificate of quality control

## Benotung

Sound (60%):	96/100
Operation (20%):	96/100
Features (20%):	96/100
<b>Total rank:</b>	<b>96/100</b>
Class:	Reference class
Price/performance:	Reasonable



Behind the lower panel sits the front-loading drive of the "Player I". Two lateral guide rails stabilise the drawer. That is another reason why it slides in and out with great ease and tranquillity.



Underneath the engraving of the company logo are two reflective panels, which only reveal what they conceal when in use. Behind the top one is the narrow display, which presents the relevant information with segmented LEDs.

## Digital Inputs and DAC Section

The "Player I" comes with four digital inputs and offers a USB port for laptops, computers or streamers. The interface works in asynchronous mode. The "Player I" works independently from the clock of the delivering computer. This way, the transport and processing of data are much more stable and deliver fewer mistakes. Thus, the increase in accuracy leads to a better sound. The "Player I" accepts HiRes files up to 192 kilohertz/24 bit and DSD128. Playback works via the DoP process. It puts the DSD signal into a PCM container. In the process of converting from digital to analogue, the DSD file is recognised and worked accordingly. Thus, the name "DSD over PCM" (DoP). The digital and analogue sections are housed separately within the "Player I" to keep the highest quality and reduce noise, hum and buzz. The "Player I" is equipped with two separate power circuits. So it avoids interactions between Laser and display control, digital signal processing and DAC section.

## Upsampling for sampling accuracy

In addition, the "Player I" upsamples incoming PCM signals to 384 kilohertz/32 bit. The conversion and increase of this sample rate improve the sound quality. This way, "Jitter" is reduced, which is a problem while processing data. The fluctuation of the sampling frequency or an accuracy deviation in the transmission cycle cause Jitter. Then the electronic does not receive the data when expected. This timing problem produces erroneous data. Again, the increase in accuracy leads to a better sound. This time, because the more accurate processing allows more exact reconstruction of the analogue signal. The "Player I" offers this reconverted audio signal at multiple ports. A balanced output via XLR, which can be considered the optimal way of transporting analogue signals. Unbalanced signals exit the device via RCA. For the digital part, it offers S/PDIF out should another device need music in binary format.



The "Player I" offers several connections. On the input side, it provides a USB port and three S/PDIF inputs. On the output side, it features balanced XLR and an unbalanced RCA connection in an analogue manner. You can attach digital devices via an electrical and an optical S/PDIF out.

## The Accoustic Arts Player I in operation

We attached the "Player I" via balanced and unbalanced output to the Accoustic Arts Preamp III. That is attached to the Accoustic Arts Amp V. We start with the KEF Blade Two. Later we switch to Audio Physic Midex. We begin with CD and the song "Hey Now" by London Grammar. Instantly, we feel a pleasant and comfortable coherent reproduction. We already enjoyed that during the test of the pre-amp and the power amplifier. So we were not surprised at all. Otherwise, the pleasure is massive. But, there is fine graduation: the reproduction via the balanced output is a notch more intense. We witness this with the vocals of frontwoman Hannah Reid. Her gloomy, brilliant and yet slightly smoky voice is simply more impressive via this XLR path. The spatiality of the sound is also more effective. We advise, to give this way of transmission priority whenever possible.



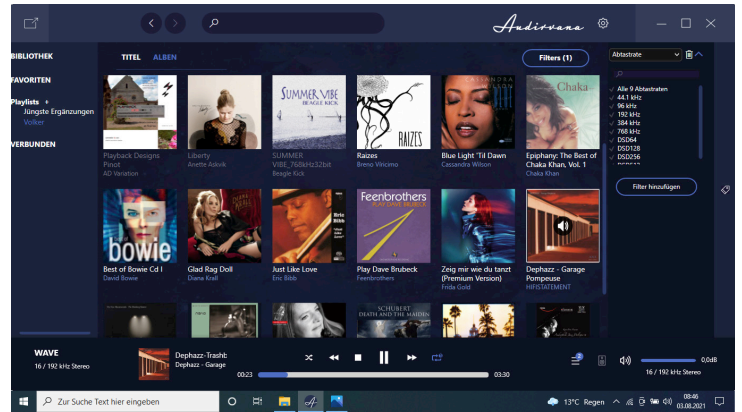
The large metal chrome knob on the left selects the different inputs. In addition to CD playback, the "Player I" with its DAC offers the integration of four digital players.

## Spatial Representation

To determine the playback quality we have just enjoyed, let us change the CD player. The now active, first-class player cannot keep up with the performance in any respect. That is how we learn to appreciate the merits of the "Player I" all the more. It starts with the width and depth of the reproduction. The "Player I" conjures up a much more spacious image in our room. The Trip Hop trio stands in front of us with a much welcome depth gradation. A neat artificial reverb fills the room, widening it to a greater extent. The echoes of the intro guitar go forth and back and take a lot of profit from this - what a nice effect, and I am even more impressed with the "Player I". Another benefit is the precision: It is precisely these guitar notes that Dan Rothman dampens with the heel of his striking hand, creating a percussive effect. The "Player I" delivers these sounds much crisper, tighter and more present.

## A Sense of Reality

In addition, "Player I" delivers a much clearer playback. With that greater transparency, the playback sounds fresher. It also opens up more acoustic information for us. Now we can identify the previously amorphous, disturbing sound carpet: On the one hand, we hear the noise of the tube guitar amplifier of Dan Rothman and, on the other, an effect feed: London Grammar have underlaid this song with hissing and crackling, as we would expect from a record. This way, the clear playback helps in understanding the music. Later, in Hannah Reid's chanting, we can witness tiny breaths, which provide a more natural and realistic singing. Those slight subtleties make all the difference. A narrowed, blurred, and thus more sterile reproduction leaves us emotionally colder. A clean rendition, providing all details, brings us close to the action, experiencing everything - it delivers this sense of reality.



For USB playback from your computer or laptop, we suggest using audiophile, HiRes-capable software such as Audirvana. This way, the "Player I" converts high-resolution files up to PCM 192 kilohertz/24 bit and DSD128 into music.

## Breathtaking Presence and Physicality

But how about a voluminous association of musicians? We switch to classical music and the Musiciens du Louvre conducted by Marc Minkowski. The gifted soprano Anne Sofie von Otter stands in front of them performing the aria "Bene-gone, my fears, fly, hence, away" from Händel's "Hercules". That creates a multi-faceted experience. First of all, we are impressed by the illustration of the stage dimensions. The soloist appears close in front of us, the orchestra at a realistic distance behind her. The groups and even individual instruments are distinct and perfectly audible. We furthermore enjoy the excellent dynamic gradation. The orchestra becomes more vivid and musicians more tangible. We perceive a body of sound in the best sense of the word. That is especially true for Anne Sofie von Otter: she has a breathtaking presence and physicality. Her artistic fireworks of coloratura, vibratos, sighs and breaths are even more thrilling, even more rousing, even more vital.

## Harmonious and Calm Playback

Now, we use the "Player I" as a HiRes DAC and connect our laptop to its USB port. This way, we stream "Trash Box" by De-Phazz from the server. The band around singer Pat Appleton, equipped with drums, bass, keyboards, guitar and horns, recorded the song live at A-Trane in Berlin. It delivers a grooving mix of lounge, jazz, soul, Latin and trip-hop in this club. Utilising its upsampling technology from the HiRes file in PCM192, the "Player I" conjures up a reproduction that allows us to perceive even the tiniest details with breathtaking transparency. It produces a high-resolution 3D representation - like the cool accord progressions of the keyboard. We also witness the brilliant coherence of the rendition and a wonderful relaxedness by the time. Pat Appleton's seductive, ruby-guttural vocals send goosebumps down our spines right away. We gradually lean back in the comfort of our sofas and involuntarily bob along with the groove.



*The Accoustic Arts Player I in the test sound chain: The preamplifier Accoustic Arts Preamp III attached to Accoustic Arts Amp V combined with KEF Blade Two and Audio Physic Midex, not shown here.*

## Conclusion

The Accoustic Arts Player I unites tradition with modern: its exclusive audio drive, the premium converter. By using upsampling technology, it offers as a cd player and as a DAC a reproduction with excellent transparency and resolution. The rendition is excessively spacious and three-dimensional, the presence and physicality of the musicians outstanding. That is also due to the overwhelming dynamics. The "Player I" conveys a feeling of reality and live performance. In addition, Player I's conversion unit sounds absolutely coherent, authentic and pleasantly relaxed. That makes listening to music an extremely relaxing pleasure. The "Player I" shines as a high-end sound expert for HiRes and CD.

*Test & text: Volker Frech  
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