

ESOTERIC

# ALWAYS SOMETHING DIFFERENT

All details of Esoteric's CD/SACD player  
can be tuned to your personal tastes.

**B**alanced, well-organized, and outrageously relaxed: those attributes went through our heads when we collected the first aural impressions of the Esoteric's "little" CD/SACD player a few weeks ago. The massive aluminum block feels musically just as calm and steady as its substantial exterior suggests: even if the K-07X is formally Esoteric's entry-level model, it's still a heavyweight.

Of course, far be it from us to imply that Number 07 sounds so grand and sophisticated simply because it weighs 14kg: instead, the main credit for these sonic abilities probably goes to its extraordinarily well-built VOSP – Vertically-aligned Optical Stability Platform – drive, using long-established Esoteric thinking on shock-resistance and vibration-proofing. By the way, if you want to read up more on the technical contents here, we can recommend you the test of 'big brother' K-05X (about 8500 Euros, test in STEREO 4/14) which you can find in our archive on our webpage. Many technical refinements of the 07X are rooted in it.

As clean as the data from the disc drive may thus be, even more extraordinary is what happens behind the scenes. The Japanese developers apparently left nothing to chance, giving every detail that could possibly introduce distortions or interference, no matter how small, a bypass circuit. From the symmetrical XLR output to the cinch jacks, digital inputs, the DSD-capable USB connection, the different filter types, and even the

The sturdy remote control gives you access to all functions – including the device menu. ▶



▲ Whenever you see SACD, you know that Sony is there: drive control and signal analysis – like all functional groups – are arranged on their own circuit board.

upsampler (called "D/D converter" in Esoteric jargon), every aspect can be switched on and off, which makes the K-07X an inexhaustible playground for high-enders who like to experiment.

**Cut it out!**

Since there are only seven buttons on the front of the housing, this process initially feels a bit laborious. You can explore the depths of the menu only with the "Mode" button (or "Setup" on the remote) and the two title skip buttons: one long tap activates the menu, a short tap jumps to the next feature, skip forward and back changes the parameters. However, all this becomes second nature quite quickly, and the learning phase really pays off: in particular, deactivating all unused

inputs and outputs results in a subtle, but noticeable, gain in command and solidity. This step is pretty much a must!

Of course, a much clearer impact on the sound comes from playing with the different filter types and the upsampler. We explored excessively, using among other tracks Kraftwerk's "Mensch-Maschine" which we alternatingly fed in via CD and USB. Already in the raw state (filter and upsampler off), the K-07 plays this classic with clean structure and great impact, but while the presentation definitely has some punch, overall the sound is rather 'light'n'tight'.

Flexible connectivity: The connections of the K-07X can be turned on and off individually. ▼



## TEST-COMPONENTS

CD PLAYER: Accuphase DP-410, T+A MP 3000 HV  
 D/A Converter: Accustic Arts Tube DAC II, MBL 1511F  
 PREAMP / POWER AMP: Accustic Arts Tube Preamp II-Mk2, Amp II-Mk2  
 POWER AMP: Luxman L-590 AXII, Symphonic Line RG9 MkIV  
 SPEAKER: B&W 803 D3, DALI Epicon 6  
 CHORD: Audioquest, van den Hul

As soon as you turn on the upsampler – which has five settings – the reproduction becomes softer and a bit smoother with each step, the final last position (“DSD”) adding a small amount of extra thrust to the lower registers without significantly affecting precision and timing. This one is probably the best fit for Rock and Pop.

Instead of the usual 24 or 32 bits, the dual-mono DAC of the K-07X works internally with a 34-bit resolution. The D/D converter switches through various calculation rules with which it prepares the audio signals for this quite exotic word length, but in the “off” position this work goes to the converter chip.

The massive drive of the K-07X stands out due to its precision. ▼

As usual, the digital filters offer different options for time (“Short Delay”) or frequency-optimized (“FIR”) modes. Our favorites are the two short variants that make the player sound more agile, thus forming a wonderful contrast to the softening effect of the upsampler. To state it in terms of Kraftwerk, the angular, twittery percussion sounds in the intro of “Mensch-Maschine” had a downright grandiose/brutal attack.

Timing definitely is one of the specialties of the Esoteric. Its precision clocks give it an unshakeable feeling for rhythm, which measurements also confirm, while jitter lies at the very low end of the scale.

However, the FIR filters will also find their fans: while they cannot deliver the speed of the Short Delay option, they do make the soundstage reproduction of the Bowers & Wilkins 803 D3 speakers a bit deeper and more solid.

At the end of this process, one thing is very clear: to explore the sonic potential of the sensational K-07X in depth you should devote attention, time, and care to the task. The Esoteric will reward your diligence with precision and control definitely outstanding in this price class – along with a sound that can be almost anything you want it to be.

*Carsten Barnbeck*



## ESOTERIC K-07X



€ 6000

Dimensions: 45 x 13 x 36 cm (WxHxD)

Warranty: 2 years

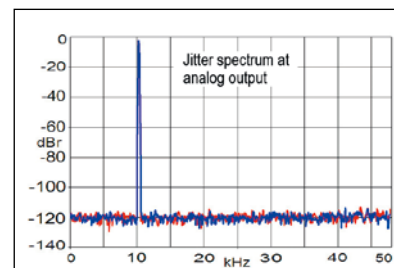
Contact: Pioneer & Onkyo

Tel.: 08142/420810

www.esoteric-highend.eu

Esoteric's „baby“ delivers a brilliant performance and plays more precisely, cleanly, and sharply than almost any player in its class.

### MEASUREMENT RESULTS



Signal-to-noise ratio Digital 0	117.5 dB
Quantization signal-to-noise ratio (400 Hz/0 dB)	96.5 dB
Distortion (400 Hz/-60 dB)	0.1 %
Converter linearity up to -90 dB	< 0.1 dB
Scanning reliability	Very good
Read time	15 s
Output impedance Cinch/ at 1 kHz	24 Ω
Output voltage Cinch/XLR at 0 dB FS	2.5 V
Channel offset	0.2 dB
Jitter	1.4 ns
Offset from sampling frequency	0.8 ppm
Power consumption	
On   Standby   Idle	0 / <2 / 20 Watt

**LAB COMMENT:** The Esoteric is as precise as a Swiss watch and achieves a lot of green measurement values. The rather long read time is typical for SACD.



### EQUIPMENT

Balanced/unbalanced line output, digi out (optical/electric), digital inputs optical, electrical (DSD-capable), and USB audio (max. 32/192 and DSD), clock input, remote control and manual included

### STEREO - TEST

SOUND LEVEL CD	94%
SOUND LEVEL SACD	94%
SOUND LEV. D/A CONVERTER	99%

PRICE/PERFORMANCE



EXZELLENT