

Clear Statement

Music says more than a thousand words? Sure, but in the case of the new DP-430 CD player from Accuphase a single word may be enough to describe its performance.

The rhetorical question, which expressed respect, came from lab head UliApel who, at the end of the day, was pulling off the measuring cables from the new DP-430: "How can anyone build such a clean unit?" My laconic one-word reply was: "Accuphase!" There's hardly anything else to say, because the Japanese have traditionally launched components which don't just make engineers turn somersaults of excitement. The makers from Yokohama are not known for phase accuracy alone, i. e. the perfect time consistency of all signals which Accu-Phase stands for. They want to deliver a product that's been well conceived and designed all the way. This begins already with the immaculate surfaces and a feel, along with a drawer that slides in and out kingly in almost complete silence, that creates and confirms the impression of luxury and long-term durability.

Homemade drive

And if, for this purpose, it becomes necessary to build a high-grade drive of their own, because more and more suppliers cease to exist ... well, then this is what they'll do. So the brand-new DP-430 CD player also has that precise, ultra solid drive à la maisonAccuphase where the plate, which carries the actual drive together with the laser optics, is decoupled from the base plate by four visco dampers to prevent vibrations, which were able to overcome the rigid housing and theresonance-optimized "High Carbon isolation feet", from seeping into this sensitive area. Of course, the digital signal can be tapped from a coaxial or fiber optics output respectively. To the modern-day listener, however, the three digital inputs should be of much more greater interest. They allow to use the sophisticated D/A converter and output stageof the DP-430 for external bit suppliers. This can be a humble MP3 player with a digital output, whose program still sounds far better over the Accuphase than if the portable was hooked to the system the analog way via its headphone socket. But a PC or a Mac may feed the Japanese just as well, now via USB interface, with high-bit files in the PCM format up to 32 bit 384 kilohertz or DSD with 11.2 megahertz of maximum bandwidth. Hence the device is prepared for all current and probably all future "contingencies". Quite possible that many DP-430 owners will rather use it as a high-class D/A converter than as a player for their CD collection. The more so as the DP-430 doesn't only qualify for this job because of its up-to-date technology. Upon selecting one of the digital inputs via the "Input" key, the display will show the sampling frequency and the bit rate instead of the track numbers, so we always know what's going on. Not unimportant, because it often takes just a minor negligence in the driver settings, and the computer will instantly downsample the high-bit files into smaller formats, something which can't be overlooked that way.

To match the Accuphase to the signal level of other devices or to obtain a remote volume control in case the connected amp doesn't offer one, the output can be attenuated in tiny one-decibel steps by up to 60 dBs. Owing to its 32-bit architecture, this practical feature won't affect the resolution of the music signal, at least not in the upper adjustment range. Because of its output stage, which is very stable for a source device and sports an impedance of only 47 ohms, the DP-430 could easily drive a power amplifier or active speakers directly, although we do not explicitly recommend this strategy due to certain sonic limitations. From a technical viewpoint, it's a piece of cake for the Japanese, particularly considering that it fully drives the vast majority of power amps with its 2.5 volts of maximum output voltage at "digital 0 db".

As unswervingly the new Accuphase passed the lab check, as unerringly-neutral it behaved during the listening tests. In line with the typical Accuphase style, the sound image is extremely open, detailed and finely structured, yet not a bit ostensible or overly present. The liveliness, which the products from Yokohama have always been known for, is primarily a result of the utterly delicate dynamic shadings that the DP-430 reproduces, too. This has rather an effect of graceful *charme* than of pedantic nitpickery, since the player always incorporates its distinct analytical talents into the musical flow and the big picture. Likewise, this touch of noblesse is a feature of even the smallest CD player.

Certainly the DP-430 can also demonstrate an iron grip, which it proved, for instance, while playing STEREO's soundcheck CD VI with its brute transients on Monty Alexander's snappy "Moanin'" that were piercing marrow and bone over Focal's ultra precise Scala Utopia Evo. But actually we paid a lot more attention to how skillfully the noble Japanese pulled up the delicate sound weave on "When I Feel The Sea Beneath My Soul" in the cover version by the Tiny Island band from Scandinavia, quasi with fine fingertips while sorting out the details that were swirling around like a swarm of silvery fish. Thus, on the basis of the intentional self-evidence in the form of a spectrum vibrating in perfect freedom and detachedness, an almost hypnotic aura could evolve.

"Accuphase" to the core

Regarding spatial imaging, the player left nothing to be desired just like when it came to separating complex bass runs, which it held effortlessly under control, yet without taming their verve. Instead it let them give the music a rhythmical drive, painting at the same time a high, wide and deep scenery while drawing sharp contours around single voices and instruments. When fed with high-res PCM and DSD files, the premium component was easily able to reproduce the quality of the recordings and therefore fully meets the requirements of the high-bit cosmos. But super high-grade CDs can also fathom its qualities.

Bottom line: the DP-430 sounds as thrilling and delicious with any source as it feels to the touch, measures and works in general. And if somebody asks how this can be, you'd preferably answer with a shrug: "Accuphase!"

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