

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION FREE WITH THE SEPTEMBER 2011 ISSUE

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO HIGH END

Bryston | BDP-1/BDA-1 | £2350/£2350

The purist approach to high-res heaven

As **single-minded** approaches go, Bryston's BDP-1 takes some beating. Think of it as a stripped-down computer, tuned for audio quality. As a consequence, the design is sparse: no touchscreen display or internal transport, and no streaming circuitry, storage or DAC. Bryston maintains these frills add noise and degrade audio performance.

The BDP-1 simply takes music data from a memory stick or hard drive via one of its four USB inputs, processes the data and squirts it out digitally for an external DAC to complete the task.

Making the right connections

The natural partner for this digital player is Bryston's well regarded BDA-1 DAC, reviewed in full on p17. We're fans of this product's connectivity and even-handed sound.

Despite the emergence of newer rivals, the BDA-1 remains a talented proposition. Whatever you use, as long as the number cruncher has either an electrical S/PDIF connection or an AES/EBU, all will be fine.

One of the BDP-1's aces is the ability to replay files up to 24-bit/192kHz. These high-resolution files lift the sound of this Bryston pair well above any CD player we've heard when it comes to outright detail, subtlety and fluidity.

Listen to a 24-bit/192kHz recording such as The Scottish Chamber Orchestra's rendition of Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No.3* and the sense of space is astonishing. Not just the space that defines the venue, but that between instruments, too. There's also a spell-binding finesse, a lightness of touch that once heard is hard to do without.



You can't stream through these two, but the sound they deliver is a revelation

Switching to a WAV version of Kanye West's *Monster* is a bit disappointing. It's not just the resolution drop; the pair's subtle lack of rhythmic drive becomes more apparent with music such as this.

The BDP-1 proves that there's life beyond CD. And if the choice of high-res content grows sufficiently, it's a future we'll relish.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR File compatibility; handles 24-bit/192kHz playback; easy to use; build; insightful sound

AGAINST No streaming; no storage; some rivals are more engaging than the BDA-1

VERDICT Limited features aside, the BDP-1 is one of the few true hi-fi media players

TECH SPECS

Bryston BDP-1

Type Client **HDD** No **Wireless** No **Formats** WAV/AIFF, MP3, WMA, AAC, Apple lossless, Flac **Networked** Yes **Inputs** 4 x USB **Outputs** AES/EBU, coaxial **Size (hwd)** 8 x 43 x 29cm

Bryston BDA-1

Type DAC **Inputs** 4 x coaxial, optical, XLR, USB, AES/EBU, RCA **Outputs** Coaxial, XLR, RCA **Finishes** 2 **Size (hwd)** 8 x 43 x 29cm