

HiFi VISION

The worldwide biggest HiFi magazin for the iPad!

Master-piece

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- One of the best compact speakers
- Finest craftsmanship from Italy

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Special Issue: Stereo-HiFi



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SCANDINAVIAN REFILL

The Swedish HiFi manufacturer Primare has set new standards in terms of sound and build quality already half a year ago with their noble 32 series. Now the Scandinavians offer their second helping and want to attract price-conscious costumers with a similarly high level of performance. We have reviewed the brand new Primare I22 and CD22 in this first test.



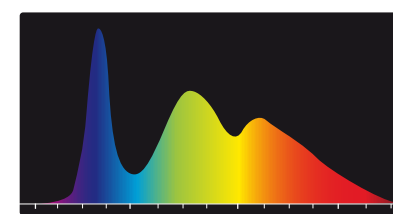
The materials used and the build quality of the I22 and CD22 are as immaculate as are their bigger siblings' from the 32 series. The brand new HiFi series also has heavy solid metal cabinets and puristic shapes. With that, Primare remain true to their decade-long tradition of building devices that are unmistakably designed, have an unerring material quality and an intuitive operability. There are only three buttons and one solid metal control knob at the amplifier – that's what I call clearly arranged!

Integrated amplifier I22

No matter how puristic the I22 looks like; on the inside there's the most efficient digital amplifier technology; similar to its big brother I32 but with just a little bit less power. By the way: Ordinary digital amplifiers usually not only deliver lots of power but also lots of distortion, noise and an unfavorable load behavior. Not so the I22 that incorporates the Primare UFPD technology: Thanks to special feedback loops and the intelligent switching power supply, the I22 is supposed to be load stable and free from distortion as far as possible. We will find out in our lab if this is really true. There are four cinch inputs available on the rear of the I22 for the connection of music sources. Unfortunately the owner of an I22 has to do without balanced XLR inputs because of price considerations; only the I32 offers them. However, there is a very nice option available for the I22: It can be equipped with a digital network card that has TOSLink, S/PDIF and USB interfaces – an ideal gadget for streaming fans (Mac or PC) and iPod users. Music from the iPod or the PC can be played directly with the I22 with 24 bit resolution and a maximal sampling rate of 192 kHz – perfect! In order to integrate the I22 into a home control system, there are a RS232 jack and a trigger signal port available.

CD player CD22

Just like the I22, the CD22 convinced us at the first go with its excellent build quality and the almost spartan front plate. There are only three buttons that allow to manage Power, Start, Stop, Skip and Open/Close, for everything else the remote control is needed. On the inside everything is a little bit less elaborate compared to



Tech facts



the CD 32. Not two D/A converters but only one Burr-Brown PCM 1792 chip is incorporated here, but this is one of the best single-chip solutions for CD players available on the market. The CD22 also offers digital outputs: On the rear there are TOSLink, S/PDIF and cinch interfaces available. However, if you want or need a professional AES/EBU output, you have to dip into your purse a little bit deeper and get yourself a CD32. It's great that the USB port has not been waived, though, so the excellent D/A converter of the CD22 can also be used for external sources, even for USB sticks.

Lab and Practice

Surprising: The I22 delivers 207 W at 4 Ohm per channel to the solid speaker cable terminals. This is about a third less than the I32 is able to put out, but the I22's music signal is equally noise- and distortion-free (98 dBr (A) and 0.002 % respectively). Even at 8 Ohm it still delivers a respectable 111 W per channel, significantly more than specified by the manufacturer. No less impressive is the CD22 that beats (at least technically) its role-model, the CD32, with 0.001% THD and a measured signal-to-noise-ratio of 111 dB. Particularly pleasing is also the standby power consumption of both devices: Less than 0.4 W are exemplary! In the listening room, I hooked the Primare combination up with a pair of KEF XQ40, a very powerful and dynamic speaker, which is capable of reproducing the most subtle nuances of the connected electronics. All I can say is: Wow! This combination plays extremely precise and gets to the heart of the music. The bass drum sounds unconstrained, complying with the Primare family character. Maybe the I22 doesn't manage to reproduce the ultimate pressure of a I32 at high listening volumes, but this is only obvious in direct comparison. In addition, the 22s manage spatial reproduction, fine dynamics and timbre exceptionally well. Ry Cooder's „Buena Vista Social Club“ is so authentic and gripping that it is pure fun.



Conclusion

Honestly? I find it very difficult to identify the differences in sound quality between the more expensive 32 series and the 22s. The same applies to the distinctive design, the massive build quality, the tactile sensation, the high-quality materials and the excellent measurements – because they are virtually identical to the 32s. Yes, the 22s have a little less power, and the stripped-down equipment could be mentioned, too, but what remains are the open, honest tone and the unbridled enthusiasm of the Primare combo. For me, the CD22 and I22 are a true HiFi highlight not only because of the very fair price!



Verdict

Primare I22

Unit price

um 1350 Euro

Internet

www.primare.net

In brief:

+ High power

+ solid finish

+ Extension modules

Sound	70 %	★★★★★
Lab	15 %	★★★★★
Practice	15 %	★★★★★

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Silver Class

Value for Money

Grade

very good

★★★★★

Verdict

Primare CD22

Unit price

um 1350 Euro

Internet

www.primare.net

In brief:

+ High-Class D/A-Converter

+ Solid finish

+ USB-Digital-Output

Sound	70 %	★★★★★
Lab	15 %	★★★★★
Practice	15 %	★★★★★

HiFi vision

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★★★★★