

# CD Player Reviews

## Sondek CD12



### ***Sondek CD12***

The Absolute Sound, TAS Retrospective, USA, April/May 2005 , April 2005

Linn Sondek CD12 Transcription CD Player ".I'm willing to go out on a limb and declare the Linn Sondek CD12 CD player a future classic - a product that will be venerated decades from now as the pinnacle of CD playback. Many of the world's most expensive and ambitious digital sources have come and gone through my system over that past 16 years. After hearing the Sondek in 1998, none was missed as much. Being briefly reunited with the CD12 in 2005 has only intensified that sense of loss...Hearing the CD12 again was like taking a breath of fresh air...listen to the music, and the Sondek is without peer."

### ***Sondek CD12***

Audiovideorevolution.com, USA, Top 100 AV Products of 2004 , December 2004

"Back up the Brinks truck for this \$20,000 CD player, but if you have the coin to be able to make the CD12 an owned reality, you are in for a treat. The CD12 is to the compact disc than the LP12 is to vinyl – the state of the art."

### ***Sondek CD12***

Stereoplay (Germany), November 2002

"...Beautifully designed and built like a tank, the Linn Sondek CD12 distanced itself musically from all former reference CD players and made it quite clear that it won't tolerate any other gods next to itself..."

### ***Sondek CD12***

Linn Sondek CD12, The Absolute Sound, USA, January 2002 Golden Ear Award:, January 2002

" It's hard to describe the sound of the CD12 because I have the impression that it had virtually no sound of its own. What I can describe, however, is the extraordinary musical involvement this player engendered. Seconds after pressing the Play button, the CD12 revealed itself to be magical in its ability to captivate me musically. The CD12 didn't sound like digital, nor did it sound like analog - it was simply a medium that communicated to me whatever musical expression was the source."

### ***Sondek CD12***

Linn Sondek CD12, AUDIOPHILE, Germany, January 2002:, January 2002

"...from the first moment we knew that this perfectionist player was going to unveil completely new worlds of sound. Sure, there are other superb rivals around that excel in certain criteria but none beat this Linn on the whole. The CD12 sounds even better than top-notch SACD-players. The Linn is the best-selling player in its class and this is not likely to change soon. After all, a new Sondek is only born every 25 years or so. Incredibly precise construction, hard-to-beat low-jitter performance, highest density of musical information ever heard, probably the best CD-player in the world, and definitely our new reference standard. State of the art."

### ***Sondek CD12***

Linn Sondek CD12 Audiorevolution.com, USA October 2001, October 2001

"The CD12's ability to reproduce the finest in musical subtleties is unmatched by any other player that I have heard. It is void of the synthetic reproduced sound that CD playback has been plagued with since its inception. It personifies the essence of vinyl without the many negative characteristics associated with the old format....I enjoyed my music more with the CD12 than I ever have before. The best way to sum it up is, if \$20,000 doesn't sound like an insurmountable amount of money to you, it could be time to own this player. The Linn Sondek CD12 is most definitely capable of musically taking your breath away. "

### ***Sondek CD12***

Linn Sondek CD12 Positive Feedback Magazine USA October 2001, October 2001

"..I decided I couldn't part with the Linn CD12 player after spending several months listening to it...you haven't heard what's on your CDs until you have listened to them on the CD12...the Linn CD12 offers the best playback available of that format...the Linn CD12 simply is the finest 44.1kHz/16-bit device available."

### ***Sondek CD12***

Hi-Fi World, June 2001

Take II, Linn's CD12 is the Sondek's Second Coming. "The CD12 is not only a beguilingly, mellifluously, musical and melodic player, it's also a festival of the senses too. By this I mean it's amazingly good at reproducing the texture and grain of individual instruments, voices and sounds. Instead of sounding like an approximation of a trumpet, the CD12 actually sounds like a real one. Of course, 16bit CD is still somewhat hamstrung on this point, but the CD12 is far more texturally accurate than any other CD player I've heard...The CD12 hangs all the elements in the mix into a wide, expansive frame with an almost architectural precision... It's awesome. It's stunning. It's incredibly lifelike - for 16bit. It makes you get into the groove, love your CD collection and spin your digital discs all night." David Price, Hi-Fi World.

### ***Sondek CD12***

Stereotimes.com, December 1999

### **The Linn CD12 Part 1: Compact Disc Reproduction Extraordinaire!, Jim Merod, December 1999**

"I consider the Linn CD12 to be one of the most remarkable "real world" diagnostic tools for the difficult, sometimes mysterious, task of learning about the hidden complexity of recorded sound." Please note this review is in the archive section of the StereoTimes website.

### ***Sondek CD12***

Hi-Fi News & Record Review, July 1999

UK Exclusive by Ken Kessler

Linnspiration : Can the Sondek CD12 rewrite the Red Book?

Immediately upon removal from its flight case, you sense greatness...A thing of beauty? So clean, so uncluttered, so perfect is the look of the CD12 that people with any semblance of taste are predisposed toward it without any verbal inducement from a salesperson or otherwise. It is, like a Zippo lighter, so right that all other CD players are rendered instantly and forever ugly. At no point does the CD12 sound so, uh, digital. It recreates space, it doesn't tamper with textures. It takes full advantage of the background silence offered by CD...I swear, the CD12 even highlights the sonic - as opposed to practical - virtues of gold over aluminium CDs...The 12's supremacy is so audible as to be indisputable by all but Linn's rivals; none of them will be able to overcome their egos to give credit where it's due, to acknowledge the achievement of a competitor...this isn't just top-grade data conversion; it's religious conversion.



### ***Sondek CD12***

Listener Magazine, USA, April 1999

All in all, the Linn is the closest I've ever heard digital come to the best analogue in every way –especially its ability to capture the flow of the music. The CD12 sings like no other CD player I've ever heard, and the next best doesn't even come close. This is really something. Then again for the kind of money they're asking, it ought to be.

Is the Linn CD12 the best CD player you can buy? If by best one means "the best at playing music", or "most like an analogue LP in its presentation and essential musicality," the answer is yes: It is certainly the best I've heard, and its margin of superiority to what I know is so huge that I find it difficult to imagine that it has any peers, let alone any better.

Since nothing I'm aware of on the market can match this level of performance, then its price – whatever that price may be – has to be considered a marginally acceptable level of value. If and when someone else does the same for less, that's when you can say the price is too high. Who knows: All we've got in front of us right now is this \$20,000 CD player that seems to have raised the bar an unimaginable distance.

### ***Sondek CD12***

Ultimate Audio, April 1999

Rosanne Cash's voice was smooth as can be, yet alive with delicate lilting detail to a degree I haven't experienced apart from a live performance. This brief encounter was all it took for me to know that the CD12's performance was revolutionary rather than evolutionary.

The CD12 reveals such a stunning level of, complex harmonic information delivered in such a smooth and relaxed fashion that it is difficult to believe this is the same digital technology employed in previous players....Thanks to the CD12's tonal neutrality and ability to unravel harmonic overtones, her soprano voice is presented with a light airy, bell-like tone that I had only experienced previously in the concert hall. Moving down through the lower midrange and into the bass, the CD12 opens up a sonic picture by injecting a level of airiness that is just as harmonically open and complex as that found in the upper frequencies.

The Linn Sondek CD12 had such a profound impact on my system that its presence, more than any other component that has come and gone, will be sorely missed. Even my wife, who could care less about the majority of hardware I review, mourned its departure. If it weren't for a pending new home purchase in the near future, the CD12, without a moment of hesitation, would be mine.

### ***Sondek CD12***

Stereophile, February 1999

The Sondek CD12 had a sense of ease that was nothing short of remarkable...The Linn Sondek CD12 is the best player I've ever heard, and the one I'd want to listen to every day.

### ***Sondek CD12***

Fi Magazine, January 1999

The Sondek's overall design and execution are unlike any other product I've had my hands on. The unit's build quality, particularly the high-precision metal work, cannot be overpraised.

The Sondek CD12 was very different-sounding than any other top-flight digital sources I've had in my listening room. The best analogy I can think of is the feeling you get for the first few minutes when listening to an orchestra after hearing lots of recorded music. The concert hall sound is so different from the hi-fi experience: violins have no metallic sheen or grain to their texture; the sound is less bright and vivid; the music has ease and resolution without a trace of analytical "detail"; and you can hear quiet instruments in the presence of louder ones. That's exactly how I felt about the Sondek; its presentation reminded me of hearing live music in a concert hall. The sound had none of the hardness, glare, grain, or edge one hears so often in reproduced music, but never from real instruments. In addition, the Sondek has a harmonic coherence that was totally devoid of the mechanical character so often heard on digital playback. Instrument textures had a harmonic rightness I associate with a microphone feed or analogue master tape. In fact, I'll go so far as to say the Sondek CD12's rendering of timbre is state-of-the-art, and by a significant margin.

The Linn presented a full measure of detail, treble openness, air, and extension, but never in a hi-fi way...the music was utterly vivid and intense. The sense of bloom, space, depth and air were all world-class. Moreover, the Sondek resolved hall ambience way down in level, which infused the presentation of naturally miked music with a warmth of reverberant decay one usually hears only from the analogue master tape, not CD.

...The Sondek CD12 is about communicating the expression and feeling that are somehow locked away as digital bits on pieces of plastic. And when judged by that criterion, the Linn Sondek CD12 is without equal.