

Magnetar UDP900

Physical media fan **Jon Thompson** applauds a heavyweight disc-spinner with audiophile aspirations



WE'RE OFTEN TOLD physical media is dead, so when a manufacturer launches a £2,699 universal disc spinner – one that's also a streamer for the media on your server and a high-end DAC – I'm both somewhat surprised and excited. Enter Magnetar's UDP900.

Since the demise of Oppo and its UDP-205, there's been a lack of a genuine premium BD player. Pioneer once filled the gap with the UDP-LX800, while others – including Reavon, Panasonic and Magnetar with its own UDP800 [HCC #340] – have all released 4K decks that are beyond 'entry-level'. Yet this new player from the Chinese brand is something else.

The weight gives you a bit of a clue. At 15.5kg, the UDP900 is the heaviest 4K disc spinner I can recall, due in part to the all-metal casework and double-layer chassis, which have benefits regards shielding the player's AV circuits from electromagnetic interference. Further adding to the unit's heft is its twin power supplies, one a switch-mode for the main digital board, the other a toroidal transformer for the analogue audio stage.

For this range-topping model, Magnetar has seemingly gone out of its way with the hardware design. Read through the brand's literature and there's lots of talk of six-layer PCBs, exotic capacitors and 'high precision, ultra-low phase noise temperature-compensated crystal oscillators'. However, for a machine built like a tank, the drive tray seems flimsy, which lets down the overall premium feel. I also experienced a few load issues with the disc not sitting correctly in the tray. Apart from that, when playing a movie, the drive was whisper-quiet to the point I couldn't hear it.

Boot up the UDP900 and the first thing you are greeted with is the familiar MediaTek-delivered home screen; this disc player is based

on the chipset also favoured by Oppo's earlier machines, so its subsystem is basically the same, albeit running fresher firmware.

Let us Prey

The UDP900 is capable of a reference-quality image, and as such is crying out to be used with a projector. It will look good if you have a 55in OLED, but you're not doing it justice. That's like driving a Ferrari in second gear.

A favourite 4K HDR workhorse, *The Greatest Showman*'s Jenny Lind sequence, shined visually – contrast, colour and picture info all first-rate. I then switched to the *Predator* prequel movie *Prey*, which premiered on Disney+ in 2022 and has since been afforded a 4K Blu-ray release due to Disney realising 'there be money in those physical media hills'. To watch it on 4K BD is like seeing it again for the first time, and on the Magnetar UDP900 it blew me away. The image appeared three-dimensional, with wonderful depth and clarity.

On Disney+, *Prey*'s Dolby Atmos audio presentation is via the Dolby Digital+ codec. On disc it's full-fat True HD Atmos and it sounded superb through the UDP900 – all Magnetar's work on shielding, components and superior power supply subjectively paying off. It reveals the soundtrack's fine detail so you end up as scared as the film's novice warrior, while solid bass lets you feel every painful blow.

I'm not surprised the UDP900 sounded so authentic and immersive. It should at this price and its main selling point is arguably its audio. Not many will buy Magnetar's new player just to only watch movies.

Private music listening is supported by a reasonable built-in headphone amp with a

SPECIFICATIONS

3D: Yes **4K:** Yes **HDR:** Yes. HDR10; Dolby Vision; HDR10+ **HDMI:** Yes. 2 x outputs (one audio-only) **MULTICHANNEL ANALOGUE OUTPUT:** Yes. 7.1 **DIGITAL AUDIO OUTPUT:** Yes. 1 x optical digital audio; 1 x coaxial digital audio **ETHERNET:** Yes **BUILT IN WI-FI:** No **SACD/DVD-A:** Yes/Yes **DIMENSIONS:** 445(w) x 133(h) x 321(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 15.5kg

FEATURES: XLR/RCA stereo analogue out; USB-B DAC input; USB-C; RS232 control port; file playback over a home network; dedicated ESS9038PRO stereo DAC; HDR-to-SDR conversion; Pure Audio mode; twin power supplies; dual-layer chassis

full-size jack. A digital volume control appears on the UDP900's display when you plug in your cans. The volume is controlled using the remote, and the deck powered my Sennheiser HD650s like a champ. These are hard-to-drive 'phones, but played loud with no distortion.

Adding more weight to the notion of the UDP900 as a do-it-all device is that it will function as a standalone DAC, with a USB-B input on its rear panel. Hit the XMOS button on the handset (X MOS being the developer of the player's USB solution) and the UDP900 switches into DAC mode (up to 192kHz PCM and DSD128), outputting over RCA and XLR analogue or the headphone socket.

A word on its audio connections. Adjacent to that USB-B port are RCA and XLR stereo pairs powered by a Sabre ES9038PRO chip, for two-channel listening. But it also has a 7.1 output via RCA sockets, fed by a separate eight-channel ES9028PRO device. The latter performs admirably, but you would be foolish to own a UDP900 and not have it hooked up to a decent AV processor, making use of its second, audio-only HDMI socket.

Naturally there's 3D Blu-ray playback for the one or two discs that still pop up from time to time. Full HD Blu-ray playback is generally excellent, although in a genuine high-end setup an external scaler will give it a boost. Those still watching DVDs are rewarded by a solid performance, and there's a 24p playback option for US DVDs encoded in 3:2 pull-down to give you a pure 24p output.

Fine dining

A display or projector is only as good as the signal you feed it, so you need a reference player if you want a reference performance from your home cinema. Magnetar's over-engineered UDP900 more than fits the bill ■

HCC VERDICT



Magnetar UDP900

→ £2,699 → www.magnetar-audio-eu.com

WE SAY: From the extravagant build quality to its myriad features and top-flight audio and visual performance, this is a Blu-ray player like no other.