

AUDIO  
FILE

CD player  
 Made by: Hegel Music System AS, Oslo, Norway  
 Supplied by: Hegel Music System AS  
 Telephone: +47 22 605660  
 Web: www.hegel.com  
 Price: £4000



# Hegel Mohican

After Fenimore Cooper, Hegel is punting its £4000 Mohican as 'The Last...' CD player. There's no digital audio input, no doubling as a DAC, and no SACD – which is all very unusual in 2016. But there's always an argument for a product that does just one thing supremely well.

Like Hegel's HD30 DAC [HFN Jan '16], the Mohican uses a 32-bit AKM AK4490 converter run in native 44.1kHz/16-bit resolution, so there's no upsampling, and in turn this allows a simple digital filter option.

Hegel's proprietary SoundEngine 'real-time distortion detector/eliminator circuit' for amplifiers has also found an application in the Mohican, where it's used to 'clean up' the drive for the DAC's master clock. It's claimed that this pushes

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phase noise down below that seen in the HD30 outboard DAC.

Also, rather than using a CD-ROM drive, Hegel has chosen one of the very few dedicated CD audio drives now available, from Sanyo, used with Hegel's own servo board. The casework comes in black or silver finish with cast ends and a gently curved fascia, to which flat top and bottom plates are bolted to produce a rigid structure.

The fascia design is a visual match with Hegel's amps but the knobs don't turn, instead each one provides three functions (duplicated

on the remote) when you press its periphery at different points – on, drawer open, play, pause, etc.

At the back are balanced XLR and RCA phono analogue outputs, while the digital output – should you wish to use the Mohican as a CD drive only – is a true 75ohm BNC connector. And that's it.

## REAL PRECISION

It doesn't take more than a minute or so to realise that this new Hegel player has an ability to just let the music through without getting in its way, and it has a real neutrality.

Listening to Gwyneth Herbert and 'Perfect Fit...' from *Clangers And Mash* [NaimEdge] gave the feeling of a completely uncluttered and immediate studio sound.

Herbert's lead vocal was now so aptly supported by her ukelele, and other sounds she'd assembled here – handclaps, an anonymous whistler, and her own background vocals – were clearly placed

and articulated, full of her own character. The big bass drum had rhythmic precision too.

On Eleanor McEvoy's anthemic 'The Rain Falls', from *Yola* [Market Square Records], the whole piece seemed in perfect balance, with Brian Connor's fine keyboard work chiming in more appropriately than ever, especially his cunning little trickling-raindrop figures. And Eoghan O'Neill's superb playing and perfectly controlled bass guitar sound was admirable.

After this we tried the Mohican with more challenging discs,

**ABOVE: Solid build quality marks Hegel's traditional casework. Flanking a conventional disc/track time display, the controls echo the company's amplifiers. Unusually, the player sits on three rather than four compliant feet**

starting with Mitsuko Uchida and Debussy's *12 Études* [Philips]. On the lightning-fast treble passages, which, because of the reverberant Snape Maltings acoustic, can sometimes degenerate into clangorous noise, the Mohican stayed in control. It was able to reproduce the reflections from the building along with direct sound from the piano to give the ear a sense of what was going on, rather than deliver just a painful squawk.

With Dylan's *Blood On The Tracks* [Columbia], in 'Tangled Up In Blue' you could hear right into the complexities of that relentless accompaniment. Then the wonderful contrast of 'Twist Of Fate', which, with the Mohican, seemed so logically to set things up for 'You're A Big Girl Now', while above it all Dylan's amazing storytelling leapt out as fresh as ever, his every vocal nuance heard free and clear.

And Hegel's Mohican clearly exposed what seems to us a rather over-egged recording: *Quercus* [ECM], recorded in the echoing space of The Anvil, Basingstoke, by singer June Tabor, saxophonist Iain Bellamy and pianist Huw Warren. With the evocative 'The Lads In Their Hundreds', you could start to wonder exactly what was the contribution of the Anvil acoustic and what had been done in post-processing. Nonetheless, her rendition was breathtaking!

## VERDICT

Well-built, the Mohican gives a satisfyingly natural sound, which many will prefer to the super-detailed but less relaxed sound of some 'upsampling' players. It's so easy and enjoyable to live with. ↓

## HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Max. output level / Imp. (Balanced)	2.51Vrms / 21ohm
A-wtd S/N ratio	109.9dB
Distortion (1kHz, 0dBfs/-30dBfs)	0.00052% / 0.0008%
Dist. & Noise (20kHz, 0dBfs/-30dBfs)	0.00054% / 0.0009%
Freq. resp. (20Hz-20kHz)	+0.0 to -0.22dB
Digital jitter (44kHz/16-bit)	116psec
Resolution @ -100dB	±0.1dB
Power consumption	10W (1W standby)
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	430x80x290mm / 10kg