

# Hegel Viking

Wondering exactly how good your CDs could sound? This will help, says **Mark Craven**

**NO DOUBT YOU'RE** aware of the 'vinyl revival' but did you know that CD is also on the up? Well, that's the rumour anyway, and some hardware brands do seem to be thinking along those lines. Hegel's Viking CD player arrives some seven years after the company's Mohican model, which it described at the time as its last CD player.

The idea here is therefore to go one step further and extract even more audio goodness out of the format. And it is just CD – the Viking offers no Super Audio CD playback, which at £4,500 might strike some as being parsimonious.

Upgrades over the Mohican are numerous. The front panel display is now an OLED type, and the slot-loading drive mech and laser pickup are both new. The DAC has been entirely overhauled (the player will work as a transport too, thanks to its BNC digital output), while the



analogue output stage, with balanced and unbalanced connections, is also fresh.

Clearly engineered with care, the Viking's playback of CDs is often revelatory. It throws stereo music wide open, placing instruments and players on a deep, fluid soundstage. Whatever the material, be it hard rock or sunny pop, it gives you a better appreciation of what's been on that silver disc all along. It digs up plenty of subtle detail, without over-doing it; there's a smoothness to its top-end that invites you to listen for hours. The bassline in The Marshall Tucker Band's 'Can't You See' was

**Hegel's Viking: yours for £4,500...**

rich and deep, with every note distinct, while Lana Del Rey's vocals throughout her *Lust For Life* album sounded sweet as honey.

If you're using a budget Blu-ray spinner for CD playback

and want to upgrade your system, there are other, more affordable dedicated models that should probably be your first consideration. Yet that's not to deny the charms of Hegel's Viking. Build quality and design are immaculate, and its performance is captivating. Will it be the company's last ever CD deck? This time it's not saying ■

**HCC VERDICT**



**Hegel Viking**

→ £4,500 → [www.hegel.com](http://www.hegel.com)