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AUDIO REVIEWS

Reviewer Andrew Harrison's reference system at the time consisted of a full dCS stack. Yet in his HiFi News review of the Lektor Grand, he remarked that *"where the dCS would give a neutral, nearly dispassionate rendering, the Ancient Audio player had a more engaging personality ... thanks to its sweet, liquid and organic presentation there are few machines that will take you closer to the heart of the music."* For details, you'll have to purchase a [download copy](#) of his 4-page review. The gist above whet one's appetite enough though. Particularly if suppressed rumors were true about the new Lektor Prime being even better than Harrison's review loaner. Now add -- or better yet, *subtract* -- the latter's requirement for ten discrete I-squared-S links to taxi the various signal components between 3 boxes. The one-box-contained Prime suddenly not only looks the sharp but smart and sensible choice in the Ancient Audio catalogue.





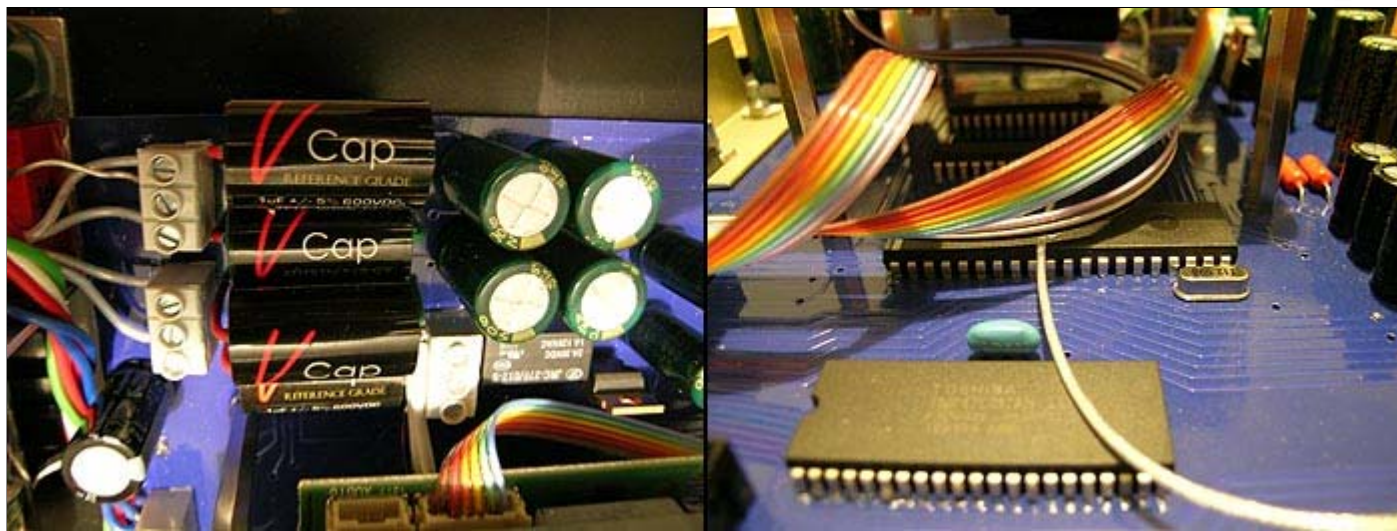
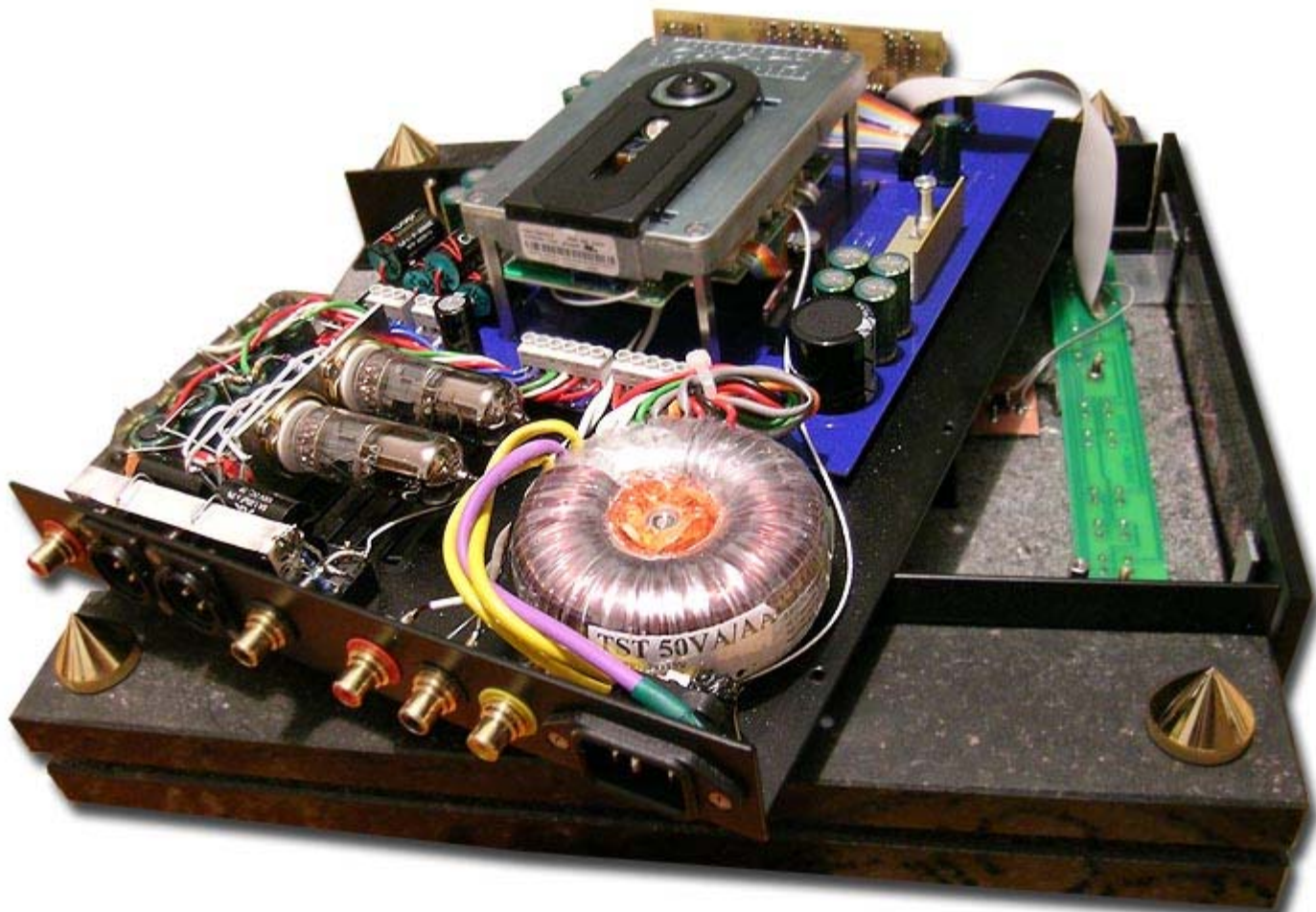
My hopes for the Lektor Prime were unapologetically high. A recent award by the Polish High Fidelity magazine indicated that they might be well placed. Of course I didn't discount the possibility entirely that a bit of nationalist pride might have crept into that award. Still, I was exceptionally psyched by the implied promises of this luxury machine.

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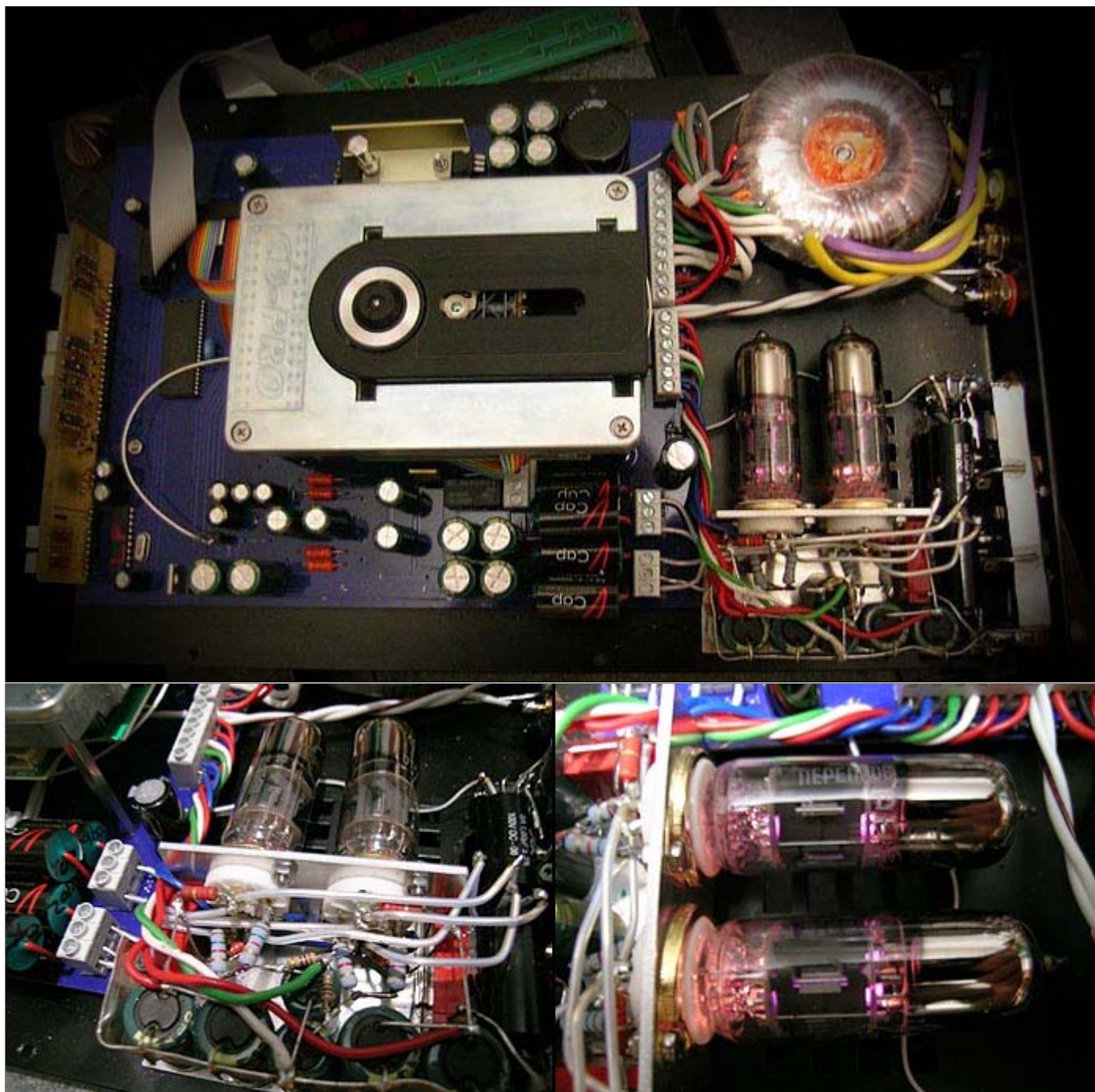
The sturdy wooden crate delivered the player from Krakow intact and without a scratch. In fact, the immaculate shine of the flawless granite base made reflection-free photography a challenge I would not prove entirely equal to.



But first, the obligatory tour of the innards. One specific detail thereof probably explains why the Lektor Prime failed to impress at first. To wit, four V-Cap Teflon/tin-foil capacitors. Those are notorious for very protracted break-in. Getting at the player guts merely required unscrewing six Philips heads, being careful not to shear off the ribbon wire's hard-soldered end from the narrow green circuit board while flipping the inset metal case on its back.



The multi-tapped toroid feeding a large number of function hums a bit. Add to that the mechanical whirring of the exposed Philips transport -- I'm very familiar with it from my Zanden which contains it inside a sealed well -- and the Ancient Audio machine suffers from a bit of operational self noise. This could bother hyper-fussy 'files with very low noise floors.



To enable the elegant low-rider form factor, the 6H30 triodes are by necessity mounted horizontally and vented through slots on the base. Life expectancy for these valves is given as 5,000 to 10,000 hours.



As a fully dual-differential circuit, the connectivity bay of course includes XLR outputs though single-enders are provided as well. One set of RCA analog inputs and one S/PDIF digital output complete the clearly marked options while the obligatory IEC power inlet completes the expected socketry. The numerical red readout maxes out at 99 in full 1dB steps of 0.05dB accuracy. 87 equates to the industry-standard 2V. The additional gain between 87 and 99 is useful with lowish amplifier input sensitivities. Some of those may not be driven to full output otherwise. Users with preamps will want to experiment what their optimum balance between Prime and preamp volume settings is. It could be well *below* 87 to tap more preamp gain rather than Lektor gain. 99 could easily overload the input stages of certain preamps or integrations. If you experience audible distortion, back off on the Lektor's output. 99 equates to 20Vpp or 7V RMS single-ended, double that on the XLR sockets for a staggering 14V RMS peak. Exact values of output voltage and display of course also hinge on the exact gain of the tubes fitted.

Lacking is the ability to dim or extinguish the display. Ditto for track remain from toggling through the time display options. Time is available as track elapsed, all played tracks elapsed and disc remaining. The track or disc repeat icon lives in a somewhat more muted area of the readout and may not be visible from the seat during daylight. This could lead one to thinking that the remote commands for repeat weren't obeyed. Stepping closer to the display will confirm that they were. To play a disc requires pushing the unmarked solitary button on the black metal base right in front of the CD which will be affixed to the exposed spindle with the included magnetic puck. Pressing this button launches TOC protocol. It gets the disc to spin and ends in auto stop, with total disc time and tracks displayed. To commence play, press play or track number *plus* play on the remote. Pressing a direct track access button from stop won't trigger playback without pressing play too. Once the disc is in playback mode, you can of course input tracks directly.



To avoid getting dust on the laser reader, you should always keep a disc mounted to the Lektor Prime. It'll act as stylish dust cover unless you want to ask Ancient Audio for their optional version.



If you leash up an analog component and select it with the appropriate top-panel button, the display automatically defaults to volume read-out only. On first power-up, the player sets itself to 50 but thereafter remembers your last-used volume setting if you don't interrupt mains power and park it in standby from the remote or chassis power button.



Now check out box count central above. Then remember the Lektor Prime's implied promise to replace at least the three right top shelves with their four components of transport, DAC and separate power supplies. Should amp-direct connection compare favorably with the two-box Supratek Cabernet Dual below the Lektor on the left, this could reduce my setup to a single two-tier Grand Prix Audio rack: Lektor Prime into either the Melody HiFi I2A3 or the Yamamoto A-08S, with the Rane equalizer for my speakers' bass arrays on the floor below and the two small Audio Sektor Patek monos right next to it. *That's* the rare math I was hoping this review would make true. $6 = 1$. Dream stuff?

On the subject of the missing track remain display function (which the Zanden offers with the same Philips codes, in fact the Zanden remote operates on the Lektor Prime and vice versa), Jarek Waszczyszyn had the following comment: "It is a funny story. All software to control the remote, display and CD drive is written by Philips and encoded on a pre-programmed EPROM chip. This software works okay except for two errors: it is wrong for the track remain display and there is no possibility to search in pause. I pointed this out to DAISY, a Philips agency liaison for small hi-end companies. Trying to fix these errors is like improving glitches in MS Windows. Philips won't supply the source code to anybody. We tried to do it but it really would entail rewriting all the control software over again. It is very costly and time consuming, especially having to test all possible scenarios. For a small hi-end company like mine, it is rather impossible. I confirmed these errors in other CD-Pro2 players like the famous Jadis JD-1 MKII transport - it is these same." On the V-Cap break-in, "my experience says that V-Caps play excellent immediately".



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