

SACD playback lacked its DVD-A playback's imaging precision, spaciousness, and three-dimensionality, not to mention bass punch. So if you have those DVD-As hanging around, the DX-5 will play them fully resolved. On the other hand, you can rip them to files to play via your computer and the DX-5's USB port.

**The DX-5 as Blu-ray-Audio player**

Again, you'll need the LCD screen to navigate the menus of many discs, and there aren't yet that many Blu-ray-Audio releases, but Tom Petty's *Live* played without a hitch, sounding really big, full, and flowing. Neil Young's *Archives* at 24/192 produced incredible detail resolution, weight, and three-dimensionality. It was great to finally get to hear the Young set in my main rig instead of through our less-than-optimal home-theater system, but the vinyl still sounds "wetter," more lifelike, less mechanical overall—especially on sharp transients and sibilants, even though the playback process is more mechanical.

The few classical BD-A discs I have, including Brett Mitchell and the Houston Symphony's performance of Holst's *The Planets: An HD Odyssey*, sounded far

superior to any CD I've ever heard. The problem with this disc was that I got distracted by the NASA space footage, even on the tiny 7" screen.

Another one, *Mira* (BD-A, Jienat NCD002), composed, arranged, and produced by Andreas Fliflet, is a per-

Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra, of the Duo-Art piano-roll recording made by Percy Grainger (BD-A/SACD, 2L 60SABD)—something I really wanted to hear to compare to the SACD also included in this release—but I could get only a blue screen, and the default audio

**THE VINYL STILL SOUNDS "WETTER," MORE LIFELIKE, LESS MECHANICAL OVERALL—ESPECIALLY ON SHARP TRANSIENTS AND SIBILANTS.**

cussion sonic spectacular that should be in anyone's collection of "wow" demo discs (a second disc repeats the program on SACD). It sounds like American Indians meeting Argentines meeting Norwegians to chant and bang drums—something Todd Garfinkle might produce for M•A Recordings, only more closely miked. If your system can reproduce really deep bass, *Mira* will deliver plenty. It was among the best-sounding discs or files I heard through the DX-5.

I tried playing Grieg's Piano Concerto in the recording made from a reperformance, with Rolf Gupta conducting the

mode was DTS-HD Master Audio. It appears that there are still glitches to be ironed out of Blu-ray-Audio.

**The DX-5 as CD player**

When you spend time with hi-rez files and discs, it's easy to forget CDs. However, the DX-5 proved to be a very good CD player, on the somewhat smooth and forgiving side of the scale, with less "bite" and top-end sparkle, and lacking the half-again-as-expensive Playback MPS-5's bass extension and, particularly, its punch. Still, many listeners will prefer the Ayre's smoother, richer sound, just

**measurements, continued**

Into the high 100k ohms lab test load, the Ayre's balanced distortion signature with 24-bit data—what there was of a signature—consisted of the third harmonic at -77dB (0.014%), the second at -87dB (0.004%), and the fifth at -100dB (0.001%). Dropping the load impedance to a punishing 600 ohms somewhat raised the levels of the odd harmonics (fig.6), but not to anything like levels that might be audible. The "leaky" ultrasonic nature of Ayre's Listen filter gives rise to poor image rejection with the high-level mix of 19 and 20kHz tones, as well as some audioband aliasing (fig.7), though actual intermodulation distortion is very low. Switching to the Measure filter cleans up the spectrum nicely (fig.8).

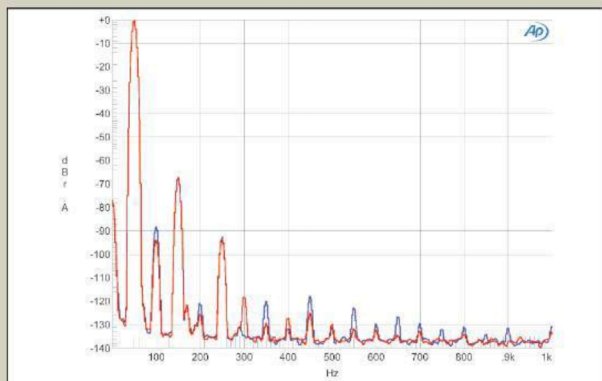


Fig.6 Ayre Acoustics DX-5, spectrum of 50Hz sine wave, DC-10kHz, at 0dBFS into 600 ohms (left channel blue, right red; linear frequency scale).

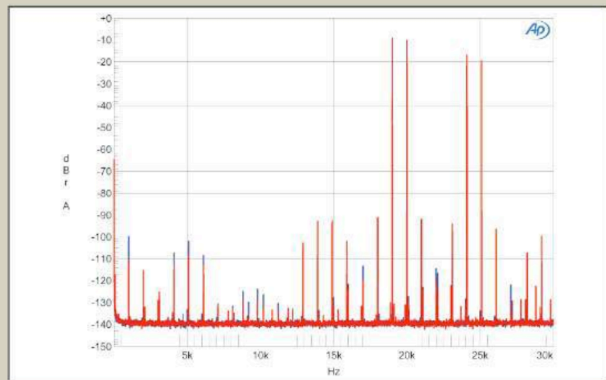


Fig.7 Ayre Acoustics DX-5, Listen, HF intermodulation spectrum, DC-24kHz, 19+20kHz at 0dBFS into 100k ohms (linear frequency scale).

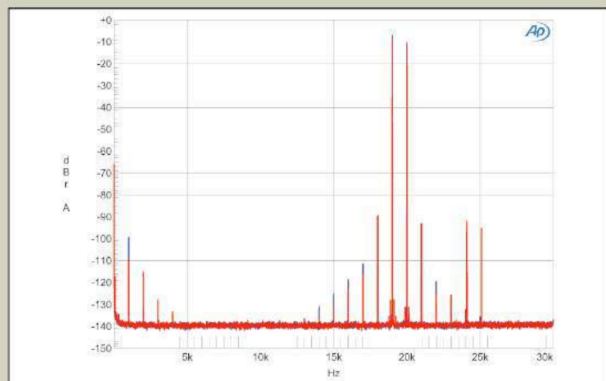


Fig.8 Ayre Acoustics DX-5, Measure, HF intermodulation spectrum, DC-24kHz, 19+20kHz at 0dBFS into 100k ohms (linear frequency scale).