



Burmester
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Burmester

Burmester 061 CD Player

by Chris Thomas

For those who don't know, Burmester are a very serious audio company based in Germany which manufactures an impressively large range of Teutonic-looking equipment. I must admit that, until I got hold of their catalogue, I had no idea just how comprehensive that range is. Within it there are several performance tiers like the Reference Line, Top Line, Classic and Rondo as well as separate sections for home theatre products, loudspeakers, not to mention equipment racks, a power conditioner and even a custom in-car installation for that most desirable of all supercars, the Bugatti Veyron. As you may have guessed none of it is remotely cheap, but you do get what you pay for as it is all beautifully built. Yet, in the UK it still remains quite rare. PM reviewed their impressive 001 belt-drive CD player back in Issue 31 and I was fortunate enough to use that very player for a few months last year. I can commend it as just about the easiest sounding high-end player I have ever lived with.

The 001 remains part of the Top Line while the newer 061 sits in the Classic range just below, but Burmester refer to the 061 as the

What's in a number...

Burmester's nomenclature is somewhat different to other manufacturers. Take the case of the 001: this derives from the year of introduction which was 2000 (00) and the 1 indicates the first player released in that year. So, as you've probably worked out, the 061 refers to the first CD player released by Burmester in the year 2006. With six years interim development I was interested whether the gap between them had closed.

001's little brother, a statement borne out visually at least as, at first glance, they do appear very similar. Both are medium-sized top loaders and have that unique and distinct chromium faceplate, a Burmester trademark since the introduction of their 758 pre-amplifier. They also share the Philips CD2 Pro transport although in the 061 this is used in standard direct drive form. Everything about the player exudes a quality feel. Just slide back that door on its silky Teflon rollers and you'll soon get the idea what this machine is all about. Whilst it has a whiff of the "lifestyle product" about it, it is in fact a very versatile, high-end unit that can be employed in a number of ways. You could use it as a straightforward CD player connected up to an analogue amplifier through either balanced or single-ended connections. Burmester make a point of recommending the balanced option and having tried both I would agree that it does have the edge. It can also be used as a processor for other digital sources like DAT players or other digital sources. Its digital inputs can process PCM data with a sample rate of up to 192kHz which is switchable from the standard 96kHz via the remote control. Naturally, digital outputs are also available. Additional connections can enhance the player's versatility even more within an all-Burmester system. There is an MMI slot that

will enable the user to integrate any future developments for the 061, like a multi-media interface and a method of controlling the whole of your system by computer, called a Burlink. Also, as with other complete manufacturer systems, you can hook the 061 into other Burmester components via a mini-jack, making it the slave or the master for switching purposes. The remote control is a heavy, stainless steel affair that is complex and not particularly intuitive, but with 47 buttons it could



hardly be anything else. It is a full system remote so some of the buttons are irrelevant to the 061's operation but, even after a couple of month's continuous use, I still have to look to locate the transport functions. Discs are held in place by a fairly high-mass clamp and the player is supplied with a dedicated Burmester mains lead.

As if to remind me of the excellence of the 001, Burmester sent one along for comparison and to give a performance yardstick against which to measure the 061, but both machines needed some pretty intensive running-in. So, after a couple of weeks on continuous play both were installed side by side and the listening began. I spent a few days with the 001 first to reacquaint myself with this

▶ excellent player. I remembered that when I used one last year it drew as many admiring comments as the Lyra Connoisseur pre-amplifier across a remarkably broad spectrum of listeners with long-term Naim users particularly enthusiastic and fulsome in their praise. Everybody loved its rather unspectacular way of making music and I was continuously struck by its free-flowing, liquid, rhythmic abilities. It wasn't the most obviously detailed

and I was fascinated to know how close to this stellar performance the 061 could get.

So, I put the 001 to one side and still using the balanced outputs began to listen. I wasn't quite prepared for how different they were. The 061 was immediately less sumptuous in its balance and more forward in its presentation. You just couldn't miss the extra tautness in the sound and the increased impact that the music gained. Where the 001 has this smooth flowing quality to the rhythmic energy and tempo, the 061 has more transient grip and

its bandwidth as it drives the music with real high-impact precision. But it never becomes fatiguing, as its overall tonal balance is so good. *Consequence Of Chaos*, the new album from Al Dimeola (Telarc 83649) really highlights the 061's abilities when it comes to getting musical information off the disc and into the room. Al, of the twinkling fingers, is a technique guitarist for me. High on pace, often doubtful on taste, he always has his inspirational moments but on this CD he must be on tranquilisers as he actually manages to restrain himself a little more often and play some interestingly melodic lines – although he can't resist the temptation for

long and soon ends up tearing the fret board to shreds before vanishing up his own backside in a blur of note-play. As always though he uses the very cream of American musicians so the playing is of an extraordinarily high quality. The 061 deals with the intensity of this

music with contemptuous ease and never drops a stitch, even when the rhythmic and tonal threads grow ever more dense. The degree of separation and transient recovery it manages to maintain is remarkable and allows you to concentrate on any one of a million small details. You don't only hear what is being played but appreciate how it is being done. The sheer articulation of the percussion and the way in which it has been incorporated into the fabric and style of the music brings you into close contact with the physicality of the playing. It goes way beyond just hearing the sound of the instrument ▶



player I had heard, in fact it could sometimes seem a little soft around the edges, but I always enjoyed listening to music through it as it was composed, tonally expressive and I could play it for hours on end and never be disappointed. For once it was a product that didn't sound the way it looked. I was expecting it to be rather brash, detached and shiny like its case, and a model of cool, detached German efficiency – but what I got was a rather cuddly and very emotionally involving musical experience. The new 001 was just the same only this time I used it with the Vitus SS-010 amplifier and employed the balanced outputs. It was a winning combination with the JMLabs Micro Be's, Nordost Valhalla speaker cables and Tyr balanced interconnects (I didn't have any balanced Valhallas which I know would have sounded even better)

initially seems faster and more authoritative. It appeared as if this was a more dynamic machine altogether though, even at the early stages, I noticed that there seemed to be less low-level ambient information. It was almost as if the 061 was the more detailed player with high frequencies having more presence and vitality even though it is unquestionably leaner and a touch harder.

As the memory of the 001 faded I began to listen to the 061 as an individual and less as the little brother. I find it quite different in its sense of momentum and the way that musical energy is employed. The 061 must be one of the tightest CD players I have ever heard. It really gets a grip on the bass and is articulate through

▶ and into the world of technique and phrasing where you really get the message that these are serious musicians, at one with the musical idea and feel of the track.

The Burmester is so focussed and dynamic that it always seems to have headroom in hand and can surprise with the impact it manages. But its abilities run far deeper than just the imposing and dramatic side of music as it is equally at home with sweeping orchestral vistas or vocals.



I've grown really fond of Alberto Iglesias's musical score for *Talk To Her*, the film by strange but interesting director Pedro Almodovar (Milan 36005-2). On 'Hable Con Ella' I loved the way that the 061 showed such a full range of instrumental textures and flavours as it meanders musically through the Spanish countryside constantly counterpointing sweeping Iberian-flavoured passages with delicate yearnings from the violin and the hint of flamenco haunting the background as the wonderful Vicente Amigo suggests the religious overtones of Rodrigo in both note and tonal colour. As the music flows it paints a picture of Spain in sound (and I don't mean Benidorm) that is as evocative as anything I've heard for a while. This is the beauty of film music and in this case, the genius of Iglesias. I've heard this disc on quite a few systems now with varying degrees of enlightenment

but the 061 really showed the structural poise and sense of poignancy that makes the experience so special to me.

What lies at the heart of this performance is the clean, high-resolution nature of the Burmester and as long as it can remain rhythmically on the ball, that is never going to be a bad thing for any quality audio component. This the 061 manages with aplomb, combining high levels of detail with speed and real agility. It has that taut grip and control over the music that puts me in mind of the Teac Esoteric X-01 and while it

can't quite manage the extraordinary levels of micro information that pour from that exceptional player, it has a sense of energy and musical progression that sets it apart from many other sub £6K designs. It would be very easy to hear the 061 on a single type of music and reach the wrong conclusions about it. It really does deserve to be auditioned with very high quality ancillaries and I can see it working in many systems put together with different philosophies. I think that Burmester have gained an unfair reputation in the UK. Every time I mentioned that I was reviewing one of their products, one of the first things that came back was the word "expensive". Well, having lived with both the 001 and the 061 for a while now, I cannot agree. I should make it

clear that I still prefer the 001 to the 061, but the fact that the former is over six years old and still puts in such a completely satisfying performance speaks volumes for the depth of quality found in Burmester's designs. To date I have only heard a couple of machines that I prefer to the 001 and they were both considerably more expensive. Now consider that the same quality of engineering and finish goes into the 061, spend some time with it and then compare it to other, similarly priced CD players and I think that, like me, you'll realise that it does indeed offer excellent value for money. Add in its versatility and it actually makes offerings from several other high profile manufacturers look seriously expensive. Burmester, and the 061 CD player in particular, are well worth serious investigation. ➤

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Type:	Single box CD player/ processor
Transport:	Phillips CD2 Pro
Digital Inputs:	2x RCA 1x Optical (Toslink)
Digital outputs:	2xRCA 1x Optical (Toslink)
Analogue outputs:	1xXLR (balanced) 2 x RCA (unbalanced)
Dimensions (WxHxD):	482 x112 x 340mm
Weight:	9.6 kg
Price:	6990 Euros. (Approx £4695.)

Manufacturer:

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