



Leema Acoustics Sirius £3,995



Ripping CDs directly to the hard drive is a welcome feature, but is it enough to justify the price hike?

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Leema Acoustics
Sirius

ORIGIN
UK

TYPE
Music server/DAC/
streamer/CD ripper

WEIGHT
11kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
440 x 112 x 313mm

FEATURES

- 4TB built-in HDD storage
- 32-bit/384kHz PCM and DSD256-capable DAC
- Roon compatible

DISTRIBUTOR
Leema Electro Acoustics Ltd.

TELEPHONE
01938 559021

WEBSITE
leema-acoustics.com

As the heaviest and one of the pricier components in the group, Leema's first model in this category is reassuringly well equipped with 4TB of storage that can be increased to 8TB for an additional cost. A slot-loading CD mechanism on the minimalist front allows disc ripping directly to the hard drive in either WAV or FLAC formats and there's support for Tidal, Spotify and internet radio streaming services.

Network audio players can see the Sirius over a network and stream directly from it and, like the Melco (p35), it is fitted with a 'streamer' port to reduce interference, but this is not active on the review model. The Sirius can then be attached directly to a USB DAC and act as a transport. Finally, it can connect directly to an amplifier via RCA phono or XLR outputs and make use of its own built-in DAC.

Internally, it uses the Innuos platform – not much of a secret as the initial setup procedure first requires you to visit the Innuos website. This is good news as Innuos has done plenty of work with its own software, meaning

that the Sirius feels stable and easy to use. One idiosyncrasy is that it uses software originally for Squeezebox platforms and so needs a compatible app to give control into an external DAC. Unlike the others, it is Roon compatible and also works normally with network streamer apps. Build quality is superb and it runs silently.

Sound quality

Even without the dedicated server output, the sonic performance is impressive. *Letters* is well controlled and very spacious with room around Barker's vocals and a meaningful relationship between her and the supporting instruments. *Black Sun* sounds powerful and has the right feeling of drive and power to it. There is a slight hesitation before the Sirius starts playing the DSD of *Personal Jesus*, but once it does it is able to deliver the same encouraging sense of drive and attack.

Switching over to USB into the Hugo 2 allows it to demonstrate the same composed and unobtrusive performance – effectively delivering

SONIC STAR

If you're looking for a solution that will also do decoding and playback, the Sirius is the most capable option here. The DAC stage is built around an ESS Sabre 9028 chip and is a very strong performer. Listening direct, the Sirius offers a heady combination of low-end authority and scale combined with tonal realism and a naturalness towards vocals that makes some of its rivals here seem a little obvious. There is a complete absence of noise, which ensures that everything comes across as dynamic and full of low-level detail. There are no issues shifting between different sample rates and the gapless playback system works extremely well. It's impressive versatility means that it's perfectly possible to use the Sirius as a standalone component and move to using it as a server-only device at a later date should you wish.

the best signal possible to allow the decoding to do the job that it needs to do. Connection to the Chord is very quick and entirely stable with no issues moving between different sample rates. The low levels of noise on the USB connection ensure that fine detail in the music is easy to distinguish, while the texture that is present in Barker's vocals really helps add to the sense of realism.

This very quiet background also aids the dynamic range while the rendition of Nils Frahm's *Hammers* particularly benefits from this with the audience being an almost silent but tangible presence in the background. This doesn't affect the piano as the focus of the piece, though, and the very real tonal accuracy coupled with the excellent sense of decay to notes is very apparent. As a final part of the Sirius' arsenal, the performance with a second UPnP source playing remains completely unaffected ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★
LIKE: Stable operation; solid build; great all-round performance

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★☆
DISLIKE: High price; uses specialist apps for direct control

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

FEATURES
★★★★★

WE SAY: A flexible and nicely thought-out server that's versatile enough to fit with different systems

OVERALL

