



# Marantz CD6003/PM6003

Another combination of budget-priced CD player and amplifier that's brand new on the market, Marantz's '6003 separates are direct replacements for the CD6002 and PM6002. The obvious difference is the exterior styling, now fashioned in what Marantz terms its 'M1' front panel and 'reference standard' strengthened chassis design like the rest of its current portfolio.

Marantz boasts a lower impedance toroidal transformer and better power transistors in its amplifier compared with the previous model, while the CD6003 now employs the same Cirrus Logic CS4398 DAC used in the more expensive SA7003 and '8003 CD/SACD players. While this '6003 is CD-only, it has gained some trickle-down features from Marantz's 2009

EISA Award-winning SA8003 [see *HFN* Oct '09], notably the USB interface offering digital connection of an iPod and iPod operability via the player's remote. The USB input is compatible with WAV files too.

## CLEANING UP

Like so many Marantz components before it, this duo has a way of music making that is highly endearing. This was most noticeable on the messy Squeeze track,

the Marantz combo able to make the best of a bad job and never sounding compressed or forced. Vocal diction is particularly explicit even when the recording is foggy and dynamically squashed. Later swapping of components proved this to be a characteristic of the disc player, not the amplifier.

With the much higher fidelity Barb Jungr song the Marantz duo sounded spacious and vivid, although there was a greying of tonal colour and lack of extension to the sound of Danny Thompson's acoustic bass accompaniment. And compared with the Cambridge and Pioneer combos in this group Jungr's voice sounded slightly monochromatic and bleached, while the piano had a faintly mechanical aspect that was simply less real.

## STAR SPINNER

Somewhat akin to the Denon combo, the dynamics of the tympani were a little crushed by the Marantz, but there was more sparkle and 'life' to the sound where the Denon had smoothed things over.

It's the CD6003 that's the star of this combination. Unusually it has a pitch control as well, making it ideal for those studying music, whilst a comprehensive range of programming features together with the USB interface make the CD6003 a flexible player indeed.

Sound Quality: 70%

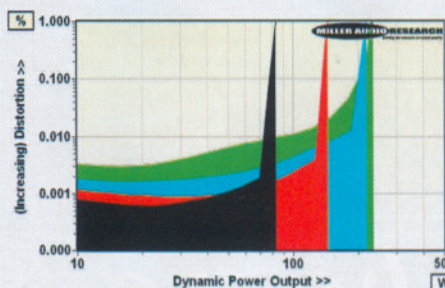


ABOVE: Features galore on Marantz's M1-style fascias, including a headphone socket, support for USB audio and even a rare pitch control on the CD player

## HI-FI NEWS LAB REPORT

Despite the familiar 'house style' of its chassis, the internal architecture of the CD6003 is specific to this player, even including a variable clock for digital pitch control. In its 'direct' mode the player offers a slightly high 2.35V output, a wide 109dB A-wtd S/N ratio and very low distortion that holds below 0.001% over the top 30dB of its dynamic range through the midrange and top 20dB at the highest frequencies. Low-level resolution is excellent at  $\pm 0.1$ dB over a 100dB range and jitter is as low as it gets with 16-bit CD at 120psec.

The partnering PM6003 is ostensibly the least powerful '45W' amp in this test, delivering 2x58W/8ohm on the bench. Nevertheless, like the Pioneer, its real-world speaker driving capability is revealed in its progressive increase in output from 85 to 235W under dynamic conditions [see graph, below]. The response shows a slight mid-bias but noise and distortion are usefully low. PM



ABOVE: Dynamic power output versus distortion into 8ohm (black trace), 4ohm (red), 2ohm (blue) and 1ohm loads (green)

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	58W / 95W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	83W / 145W / 220W / 235W
Output impedance (20Hz-20kHz)	0.063-0.075ohm
Freq. resp. (20Hz-20kHz, CD/amp)	+0.0 to -0.55dB / -0.3 to -0.15dB
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, CD/amp)	0.0005-0.0008% / 0.0007-0.014%
A-wtd S/N ratio (CD/amp)	109.1dB (OdBFS) / 87.5dB (OdBW)
Digital jitter	128psec
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	17W/186W (CD, 10W)
Dimensions (WHD, CD/amp)	440x106x339/440x105x366mm



ABOVE: Analogue plus digital outputs on the CD6003 are joined by MM, three line and two tape amplifier inputs. Two sets of switched 4mm speaker outlets are fitted

# Group Test Verdict

**S**tereo never went away, it was simply resting. While Yamaha, Pioneer, Denon, Onkyo, Sony – you name 'em – focused engineering resources on the development of new AV receivers and DVD video recorders, CD players and stereo amplifiers took a back seat.

In Japan, the largest market for home electronics, surround sound proved less of a 'must have' than imagined by industry professionals 15 years ago and now most manufacturers are introducing new stereo components again. This appears to be accelerating, with portable media devices prompting the introduction of USB inputs to obviate the need for separate docks.

## VINYL RULES

To cover all bases for music lovers, it's good to see that manufacturers are not ignoring vinyl replay either. All of the amplifiers in the group offer serviceable MM phono inputs, even the £250 Denon PMA-510AE, which is the cheapest here. Together with its matching CD player it sounded better than proud owners of esoteric systems would probably expect of such budget-priced components.

The CD player in particular sounds detailed and poised, the combination's weakness being the amplifier which lacks control and authority in the bass when asked to perform beyond its modest capability. With sensitive floorstanding speakers it will fill a room with smooth,

civilised sound, but don't ask it to drive inefficient mini monitors to high levels.

Marantz's new '6003 components offer fine value, especially considering the feature set of the CD6003 with its USB input and iPod functionality. What a pity it doesn't include SACD replay. To get that you need to move up to Marantz's superior £490 SA7003 player, which doesn't include the USB input. Bah! Still, the CD6003 is a 'proper hi-fi' player for a modest price, the accompanying

*'Use sensitive floorstanders and there will be little to choose between the two'*

PM6003 being the cause of this duo's slightly bleached sound. I can't remember when I last saw a regular CD player with a pitch control. This might be of little consequence, but be advised: adjusting the pitch mutes the digital outputs.

## CLEAR AND VIVID

Spending £80 more on the Cambridge combination gets you fewer features, the CD player being the only one here incapable of playing data discs containing MP3 and WMA files – although it does include CD Text. It's an accomplished player that's nice to operate, but the star of the pairing is the 650A amplifier that sounds exceptionally clear and vivid for £350. Together the Cambridge Azur 650



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components not only feel substantial but they sound fabulous as well. Offering great value they can be unreservedly recommended. Other manufacturers should study Cambridge Audio's remote handset which is a paragon of simplicity.

## PIONEERING STANDARD

We'd be disappointed if Pioneer's MK2 PD-D6/A-A6 didn't sound the best of this month's group as they cost £170 more than the Cambridge, £250 more than the Marantz and £370 more than the Denon. It's the Cambridge with which it competes directly in its sound quality. Certainly it wins hands down when playing SACDs, but if you care only about CD playback the Cambridge arguably offers better value. The Pioneer combo sounds a tad more refined with smoother high frequencies and more descriptive bass detail, and it will drive small monitors to higher levels with less strain. But with sensitive floorstanders there'll be little to choose between them. Ⓧ



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