

DETAILS



CONTACT

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SPECIFICATIONS

- CD player, tuner, iPod input and tube power amplifier in one chassis
- Philips VAM-12 CD mechanism
- Burr-Brown PCM1738 DAC chip
- VALVE TYPE:** 2 x 6P1 single-ended output stage
- 1 x RCA audio inputs
- 1 x RCA pre-outputs
- Banana plug-compatible speaker binding posts
- Remote control
- Supplied with white gloves, FM and AM aerials

DIMENSIONS: 266 x 143 x 385mm (W/H/D)

WEIGHT: 7.8kg approx

PROS

- ✦ Fantastic sounding and stunning aesthetics

CONS

- ✗ Low power
- ✗ No true iPod dock

VERDICT

Shanling's offering doesn't resemble the music centres of old, but choose a set of high sensitivity speakers and the MC-30 is capable of quite beguiling sound quality. An apartment dweller's dream system

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Aesthetics | 92% |
| Performance | 92% |
| Features | 88% |
| Functionality | 88% |
| Price Value | 90% |
| Overall | |

90%

tone
MAGAZINE
GOLD
AWARD



One-Box Wonder

SHANLING MC-30 MUSIC CENTRE **\$1749**

The last few years have seen the re-emergence of the humble (and archaic) tube or valve into the wonderful world of hi-fi in both amplifiers and tube-based source components such as CD players.

The ability of tube gear to look incredibly dramatic is one possible reason for the renaissance, but for me it's down to the way tubes make music seem somehow more natural and involving. Don't take that as a blanket statement, there is good and bad tube gear just as there is good and bad solid state, but you'll certainly know all about it when you hear the good tube stuff. Effortless, realistic, smooth and detailed are but a few of the epithets rolled out when a truly special tube component makes my acquaintance.

And so it was with the Chinese-made Shanling MC30. Comprising a decent AM/FM tuner, iPod connectivity, CD player and three watts-per-channel of tube grunt (!), the unfortunately named MC-30 Music Centre is quite some piece of kit. For a start, Shanling uses a high end Burr-Brown PCM1738 to upsample CD to 24bit/192 kHz, and the quality Philips VAM-12 mechanism can be found on some rather expensive audio exotica as well.

A true statement in style, the MC-30 seems devoid of volume and input selector knobs (these are cleverly located at the top of the two front cylindrical supports), but the supplied remote control is fully featured, with input select and volume adjustment all available without leaving your favourite chair.

The iPod cradle doesn't power or recharge the much-loved portable device; a 3.5mm to 3.5mm cable is supplied to connect the iPod to the MC-30. That means using battery power only, but audiophiles would be quick to say that this offers the best sound quality...

Three watts per channel isn't exactly going to rock the party, even if the system did sound quite good with my Castle bookshelf speakers. Luckily for me I have friends in high places – enter local importer Soundgroup Holdings with the high-efficiency Klipsch RB-61 loudspeakers. These largish

stand mounts have an impressive efficiency of 95dB for one watt, and it was here the Shanling/Klipsch duo created some special magic in my listening room.

I feverishly connected the Shanling to the Klipsch RB-61 speakers, turned the volume up to around 60 per cent and left the house for a few hours' warm up.

On my return I ran into the listening room with coffee and Gingernuts aplenty, eager to see whether the MC-30's audio quality matched those luscious looks. I heard a full-boned sound with excellent depth and definition in the bass, while vocals and midrange detail on tracks such as Tori Amos's 'Crucify' sounded gorgeous and palpable. Rockier tracks such as A Perfect Circle's 'Weak And Powerless' were not disadvantaged, either; the taut basslines were captured beautifully by the MC-30 (and RB-61s, I might add), while the tense rhythm guitar line enhanced the mood of this atmospheric song.

I'd have liked more amplifier power and a proper iPod connecting dock, but the reality is that the MC-30 is a truly stellar-sounding bit of kit. Amp, CD, iPod connectivity and AM/FM tuner: one box to rule them all. ■ GARY PEARCE

