



ABOVE: All-metal remote can also control Shanling amplifiers

the selector for 192kHz upsampling. Actually, it's a bit of a shame that the green and white LED indicators, respectively, above these two buttons, clash with the overall blue scheme of things.

The remaining four controls are normal transport controls (Stop, Play/Pause, Prev and Next), and that's it, apart from the display (which gives a usefully large and clear display of track and time) and below this, dead centre, the spout-like headphone jack.

Almost as symmetrical is the back panel, with balanced (XLR) and unbalanced (RCA phono) outputs at either side, and digital outputs (AES/EBU and coaxial) in the centre, above the mains inlet and power switch.

'The singer's voice took on a sense of scale and presence that just made you wonder about that whole business of adding more channels'

With the CD500 comes a solid metal system remote, designed to operate Shanling amplifiers too. It's a rather prosaic object compared with the outrageous player, and carries a regimented array of more than 30 nearly identical small round buttons, many of which aren't relevant to this player, as well as a shift key to give double functions on most of them. Everything works, but it's not particularly user-friendly.

SOUND QUALITY

Most of my review listening was done using the majestic Musical Fidelity kW pre-amplifier and kW750 power amplifier, along with Ensemble's attractive, and very neutral-sounding and wide bandwidth Figura loudspeakers, which, especially with the kW in charge, manage to avoid sounding like a bass reflex design.

With this combination, for a start, the player

AUDIOPHILES AND OEMS

We're no longer used to seeing specialist or high-end audio coming from the larger companies that can also produce mass-market audio, but that's exactly what Shanling does. Shenzhen Shanling Digital Technology Development Co Ltd, to give the full name, is a company of awesome facilities which describes itself as 'a specialist audio manufacturer comprising of both research and development and a production and sales centre. It also incorporates the Advanced Aluminium Product Machining center.'

In fact, with its own teams of audio experts, engineers and skilled technicians, Shanling can design and manufacture any product your heart desires. The company offers 'the all-around OEM service' for overseas audio manufacturing, from design through to complete production. As a result, products from the Shanling factory appear under some well-known brand names all over the world.

Shanling clearly employs many, many very talented people, but there's no doubt that the man largely responsible for Shanling's most striking and fine-sounding hi-fi products is Zhao Vingzhi, whose signature actually appears on the front of the CD-T300 CD player. So it seems that when it comes to creating its own, flag-waving high-end products, Shanling has done something that big companies in the West find hard to do – allow one brilliant designer to take flight.

seemed to enjoy unravelling the textural and rhythmic complexities of Al DiMeola's *Consequence of Chaos* [Telarc CD-83649], and then in a rather different vein it succeeded equally well with the brainteasing rhythms of David Chesky's violin concerto on the 2005 *Area 31* disc [Chesky SACD288].

One of the first vocal recordings I tried was the magical 1954 Mercury mono recording *Sarah Vaughan With Clifford Brown* [Emarcy 814 641-2], where the singer's voice took on a sense of scale and presence that just made you wonder about that whole business of adding more channels. With the musicians arrayed with real depth behind her, the subtleties of brushwork and breathing came fresh to the ear.

Another CD I've nearly worn out, Jennifer Warnes' *Famous Blue Raincoat* [Classic RTHCD 5052] was exceptionally good on the Shanling player, sounding smooth, well-balanced and free from inner-detail muddle, yet rhythmic and involving.

With an astringently invigorating Nordic orchestral recording, Rautavaara's violin concerto with Elmar Oliveira and the Helsinki PO conducted by Leif Segerstam from the CD *Angels and Visitations* [Ondine ODE 881-2], the Shanling player had no difficulty in portraying a huge, cavernous acoustic in which instruments were convincingly tangible.

I'm sure many users of this player will drive themselves mad with the upsampling (SRC) switch. On some material, though not all, I felt that the upsampled sound has a slightly silkier quality, perhaps a little airier. It's a subtlety, a small difference but one which can be seductive. However, I think the non-upsampled sound had a better feeling of solidity, a better delineation of different instruments far back in a mix, and a perceptibly tougher edge to bass instruments, an effect which can be construed as slightly better rhythm.

All I can say is that I seemed to find my feet tapping more in the oversampled mode, and eventually