



Musical Fidelity M3scd/M3si **£2,100**

One of the best looking combinations here, this is also a pleasingly versatile and fine sounding duo

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Musical Fidelity
M3scd £1,000/
M3si £1,100

ORIGIN
UK/Taiwan

TYPE
CD player &
integrated amplifier

WEIGHT
M3scd: 6.05kg
M3si: 9.2kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD) M3scd:
440 x 100 x 380mm
M3si: 440 x 100 x
400mm

FEATURES

- Quoted power output: 2x 85W (8ohm)
- 4x RCA line inputs; 1x MM phono
- 1x USB digital input (up to 24/96)

DISTRIBUTOR
Musical Fidelity

WEBSITE
musicalfidelity.com

This great British hi-fi brand has been around since the early eighties, and has made a bewildering array of products, including some iconic ones like the A1 Class A integrated amplifier. This combo is the latest mid-price offering, and is rather more mainstream. It is headed up by the new M3scd which is a CD player complete with digital inputs – which the manufacturer tells us makes it a ‘digital hub’. It sports a new disc loading mechanism, claimed to have very low jitter and a 24-bit/192kHz-capable DAC. The machine works nicely and its disc drawer is smooth. Handsomely styled and well finished like its matching amp, it comes in a choice of black or silver aluminium fascias with pressed steel casework done to a good standard.

The partnering M3si amplifier is also new and appears thoroughly modern in both style and design – looking like one of Musical Fidelity’s high-end AMS

amplifiers that has shrunk in the wash. Largely dual mono in construction, it puts out a claimed 85W per channel of Class AB power and boasts five analogue inputs including moving magnet phono as standard, and a USB digital input that’s linked to a DAC chip running at up to 24-bit/96kHz resolution.

Under the hood, surface mount circuit boards are used, and the Class A preamplifier and power amplifier sections are split with separate taps off the large toroidal transformer.

Sound quality

Another obvious step up the sonic ladder, the Musical Fidelity combo proves an effective performer and will convince anyone that has just heard the Cambridge pairing (reviewed page 29) that there are extra sonic gains available to those that are prepared to pay for them. *King* is a little sweeter and more rounded sounding than the less expensive rival combinations, and comes over with a sense of authority that others tend to lack. There is a much more direct connection to the music; it feels less ‘mediated’ than most here, allowing the song to make a better impression.

Speed Of Sound is the same, and it presents things in a tonally smoother and sweeter way compared with the Cambridge’s rather matter-of-fact nature. The difference isn’t profound, though, showing that as you move up the price scale, any improvements become that little bit more subtle.

CENTRE STAGE

This is an elegant way of doing things. The Musical Fidelity combo appoints its CD player to be the centre of attention, with full CD playback offered plus DAC functionality. Given that a CD player needs a DAC, then it makes sense to offer additional digital inputs on it, as is the case here with the M3scd. The result is something that is easy and intuitive to use. It has one optical and one coaxial digital input, plus a USB port for hi-res playback from your computer – although this is limited to 24-bit/96kHz resolution. In practice, given that so few music files come in 24-bit/192kHz, this won’t be that major a drawback.

Partnering it is the M3si integrated amp, which also has a 24-bit/96kHz USB input and built-in DAC. It comes with a good-quality moving magnet phono stage, which is a bonus for anyone looking to include a turntable as part of their system.

The free flowing, luxuriant sounds of *Summertime* are carried especially well by this combo. It seems better able to hang instruments back in space, and place them more accurately too. At the same time, the track’s gentle rhythms ebb and flow in a less rigid and mechanical way than they do with the Mitchell & Johnson, Cambridge and Yamaha offerings. Things seem more natural and subtle.

The Cocteau Twins’ *Lorelei* is also a pleasure, although its dense, forward sound isn’t flattered by the Musical Fidelity combo; it isn’t harsh as such, but it doesn’t quite have the warmth of the Arcam and Exposure. I am particularly impressed by the power of the amplifier; it certainly goes loud in a clean and controlled way. It also proves a very detailed design, with an insight into the music that most others here can’t hope to match ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Clean, detailed, sophisticated sound; styling; build

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Lacks tonal warmth of rivals

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** Classy mid-price combo with genuine appeal

FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★

