

First Tests

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION



MARANTZ CD6003 AND MARANTZ PM6003

Marantz strikes budget gold with 6003 pairing

CD PLAYER
MARANTZ
CD6003



£ 300

↑ FOR

A musical and entertaining sound; quality build; USB connectivity; headphone output

↓ AGAINST

Nothing apart from the quality of competition

→ VERDICT

Marantz has a great tradition of building superb budget CD players – here is yet another one

STEREO
AMPLIFIER
MARANTZ
PM 6003



£ 300

↑ FOR

A cohesive and inviting sound; impressive insight and an easy-going sound; smart appearance

↓ AGAINST

No shortage of top-class rivals

→ VERDICT

Up with the elite at this price level. The '6003 is an excellent amplifier for the money

MARANTZ HIT THE spot with its now-discontinued CD6002/PM6002 CD player/amplifier combo. At less than £300 a piece, this budget pairing was a match for anything the competition could deliver. Indeed, we liked them so much that both picked up an Award in their respective categories in 2008. The 6003s have a hard act to follow.

Once given a few days to reach

“If you like one of these 6003s, we’re certain that you will like the other”

optimal performance, both these products shine. The CD player delivers the qualities Marantz always strives for: top-to-bottom cohesion throughout the frequency range, a full-bodied midrange that lacks nothing for fluidity, and impressively layered sound staging. Put on a majestic piece of music such as Holst’s *Jupiter* and it’s hard not to be impressed. There’s a good amount of detail and it’s coupled to an authoritative sound with plenty of scale, while dynamics are delivered with control. Its shortfalls are small – up against the very best there’s a slight shortage of outright clarity, and timing could use just a touch more precision – but they’re enough to have the CD player relying on its favourable price and additional features (see panel) to gain an advantage over its rivals.

Sound mode is worth a tweak

But that’s not the whole story. Read the manual and you’ll find out about the sound mode button. Out of the box the player comes with its display and digital output turned on, and that’s how the initial listening was done. But turn this off and performance increases. It’s not a hit-you-between-the-eyes kind of difference, but it takes resolution to



class-leading levels, and improves dynamics and fluidity. Used in this way the CD6003 needn’t fear any rival.

The PM6003 amplifier is far more straightforward. Use it in source direct mode – bypassing tone, loudness and balance controls – and you have an insightful unit that works well with everything from Wilco’s refreshingly under-produced self-titled album to Eminem’s deranged *Relapse* set. As with the CD player, traditional Marantz values are in place, but unlike some products we’ve heard from the company, there’s enough drive and attack to keep just about everyone happy.

The sonic balance of both the CD player and amp is consistent and the two work together well enough for us to question the need to mix-and-match with rivals. If you like one of the 6003s, we’re certain you’ll like the other.

In recent months there’s been a fresh influx of talent at this price level. There are some great products from the likes of Cambridge and NAD, and the arrival of these Marantzs – good as they are – doesn’t make these rivals redundant. What the introduction of the Marantzs does is give you yet another top-quality option at this price. We can’t wait to do the *Group Tests*.

KNOW HOW HOST OF FEATURES



MARANTZ RARELY SHORT-changes on features, and this pairing is no different. The CD player has all the standard items but adds a variable headphone output and USB input. The USB will accept all standard music files, and works with most generations of iPod. Only the iPhone remains an issue, with the CD6003 failing to recognise it. With a compatible unit we’re sure you’ll be impressed by the sound – it’s not quite up to CD level, but it remains an enjoyable listen. The amp has the usual set of tone and balance controls, but adds speaker selection, moving-magnet phono stage and a headphone output to the list. A power output of 45W per channel is par for the course.

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