BRYSTON

A Lifetime of Music

MEMO: To All Bryston Customers

SUBJECT: BDP-Pi Review in Germany

HIFI one zero

Magazine for digital HIFI

Test: Digital Music Player Bryston BDP-Pi

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Besides the large BDP-2 player Bryston has recently also started to offer the little BDP-Pi, and just like the circular number which provides its name, i.e. Pi, its range of functions seems to be infinite.

When one thinks about products from the Bryston Company, one does not normally think about compact systems, since the Canadians actually started in the studio environment, where components are always allotted necessary room in order to perform their functions in an optimal manner.

Also with their previous systems for home use Bryston stayed firmly with this credo and did not forgo stable cabinets which are fitted with large metal front panels, and thereby make systems of other manufacturers appear almost fragile.

But now with the BDP-Pi they have added a digital player which for Bryston can almost be called a micro-component, and which presents a compact alternative to the full-format BDP-Series source components. Despite its footprint of only about 14 by 21 centimeters, the small BDP-Pi does not necessarily appear to be dainty, but follows in its design the typical Bryston appearance. A sturdy metal cabinet surrounds the inner components, while the familiar substantial front panel protrudes a bit above and below the front of the rectangular cabinet.

Unusual for products from the Canadians who normally prefer the classic monochrome displays, here the solid front panel is provided with a small color display which offers

text, other information, or a VU meter, however one should not expect brilliant colors and enormous contrast in the small display. Despite that, necessary information is well conveyed to the user, and for the actual use one should use, like with every streamer, an external mobile device. This, among other considerations, is also due to the rather unusual operating controls of the BDP-Pi. While one usually finds exceptionally built control panels with clearly defined pushbuttons on Bryston equipment, the quite complex BDP-Pi must do with just three pushbuttons in light of its small size.

Furthermore two of these serve as pushbuttons for up and down and respectively left and right. The respective dual functions must be switched with the third pushbutton. All in all this this takes a little bit of getting used to, however in the meantime the BDP-Pi can indeed be operated very easily, or one can right away turn to the Bryston BR-2 remote control.

The operation of the BDP-Pi via the web browser of a laptop or a tablet is considerably easier, and using the address line the IP address of the BDP-Pi is input, and after the BDP-Pi has been turned on, its IP address will then show on the display. From there one reaches the user interface of the small digital player which is called “Manic Moose.” Here the full functionality of the BDP-Pi unfolds, which despite its size can do everything what full sized streamers master.

Memory releases, which are located in the same network as Player and Tablet, can be called up and subsequently put together as a library via the NAS configuration. This means that one does not have to switch between individual accessible memories, but instead one can create a central interface for all available music.

But at the same time the BDP-Pi can be employed by itself as Network Attached Storage, in order to supply music to other source devices. However since the BDP-Pi does not incorporate internal storage, mass storage devices such as USB-Sticks and external hard drives must be attached to it. Despite its limited cabinet size, the BDP-Pi incorporates four USB interfaces, and also here the transmitted music is added to the library of the digital player. Thereby titles and albums can be subsequently processed by means of the browser so that missing metadata or wrong captions can be corrected.

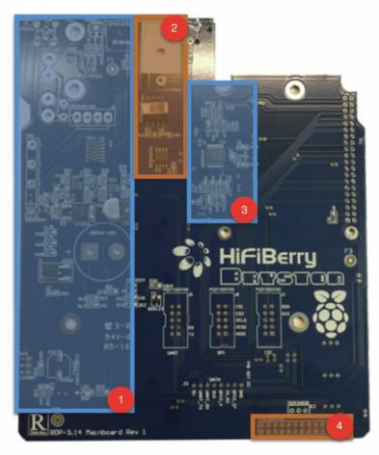
However the USB interfaces serve another purpose, because there is not only an input, but also an output which can be connected to an appropriate D to A converter. Here one can do without the installation of a driver because thanks to Plug-and Play it suffices to simply choose an appropriate DAC as the output device via the browser control. So it is possible with a BDP-Pi, an optical drive BOT-1, and a matching DAC like the Bryston BDA-3 to put together a full-fledged music server with ripping function, which thanks to the small size of the player and the drive is

only marginally larger than the D to A converter alone. This also explains the unusual decision of Bryston to develop a compact system in order to be able to simply and unobtrusively expand their own DACs.

But of course the BDP-Pi can also be used as a source device with any other DAC. Then music in the library, arranged according to selectable parameters, is listed in the menu on the right side of the playback screen ready to be chosen in the browser control. After the choice of a specific album all chosen titles therein appear in the waiting que on the left side of the screen, from which uncomplicated playlists for later use may be stored. The middle of the playback screen however is reserved for a large picture of the respective album cover, augmented with different information such as metadata, file format, bit rate, and resolution.

Essential control elements such as Progress, Play and Pause, always remain displayed into the top side of the display while using the BDP-Pi, no matter whether one is in different menus or in the display itself. Moreover besides the titles from one's own library, there is also the option to stream music via the Internet. For this there is a radio service by means of which different transmitters from all over the world can be heard, and this on-demand-streaming is likewise possible with the BDP-Pi. Via the menu item applications one can call up the entire catalog from Tidal, whereby all functions of the service are integrated into the web browser operation.

However not only its own integrated Manic Moose can be utilized for the BDP-Pi, because also other programs and apps are able to use the digital player. Consequently fans of the legendary Squeezebox can also use the little streamer as a source, as well as users of the considerably newer and likewise popular Roon. So the compact BDP-Pi turns out to be astonishingly versatile, and can be tuned for the already available hardware of the user as well as to preferred software. This is made possible through the hardware platform used by Bryston which is also responsible for the name addition of the BDP. The popular minicomputer Raspberry Pi, in combination with the HiFi-Berry-Platform, serves as the central processing unit for the BDP-Pi.



Especially in the realm of audio the tiny computer has established itself as a serious piece of hardware. Moreover the open system enables a multitude of applications for knowledgeable users by means of which the BDP-Pi can fulfill additional functions, which were not implemented in the software by the factory. Furthermore the comparably narrow system in combination with the focused hardware offers few points of attack for interference and signal disturbances.

Even though the Raspberry Pi is not provided with the greatest processing power, the BDP-Pi does work smoothly, and is naturally fully HiRes-capable. PCM signals can be processed up to 192 kHz at 24 bits, while the actual format is almost of no concern because the Bryston digital player can properly deal with lossy, lossless, uncompressed diverse formats.

So the BDP-Pi processes data for every connected D to A converter with S/PDIF, HDMI, or USB input exceptionally well. Soundwise the signal of the player is hardly affected, but permeated with tonal neutrality, however in return it is endowed with excellent attention to detail and transparency. Hence Bryston has created a clever digital player which harmonizes well with already existing systems, and thanks to the Raspberry Pi and HiFi-Berry based system can not only fulfill many sided functions, but can also satisfy all HiRes Audio demands.

Philipp Schneckenburger

HIFI Checksum

"Bryston's BDP-Pi is clearly more than a mere digital Player, because the many sided capable hardware is completely adaptable to the user with connectivity, formats, resolutions, operation, and range of functions.

Besides this the high aspirations of the Canadians in matters of workman- ship and sound is maintained even with their smallest system."

Translated from the German by Peter Ullman