

SACD PLAYER  
DENON  
DCD-2010AE  
★★★★★  
£1700

**↑ FOR**  
SACD performance; refinement and authority; digital inputs; iPod connectivity; class leading build and finish

**↓ AGAINST**  
Lacks a little rhythmic drive and attack regardless of disc format

**→ VERDICT**  
The Denon's performance is competitive, but it trades excitement for smoothness

## Denon SACD is a smooth operator

**SACD: HOW MUCH** does the format matter to you? We only ask because your answer will dictate whether Denon's new disc player deserves a place on the shortlist.

If you're a fan of the high resolution disc, the DCD-2010AE is a must-listen product at this price. Listen to Eric Bibb's *Where the Grass Grows Green* on both disc formats and SACD's extra resolution is obvious. There's far more subtlety in dynamics, improved top-end refinement and a better sense of musical

flow. It's all enough to have us wishing SACD had made a bigger impact on the market.

That's not to say this Denon sounds perfect with SACD: for all its refinement and detail, it could do with greater dynamic punch.

### Splendid build and spec

Switch to CD and overall sound quality drops, as you'd expect, but by class standards the Denon remains a decent performer. It has the authority to deliver *The Dark Knight* OST with suitable menace,

and enough finesse to work well with low-key albums such as Tracy Chapman's *Let It Rain*. However, the presentation is still just a touch restrained for us.

Still, we can't think of a rival that feels so solid or classy, and the Denon's well-equipped, too. It has digital inputs plus a USB in for connection of an iPod, or for WMA/MP3 music file retrieval off a USB memory device.

This Denon is good with CDs, great with SACD, well-made and lavish. Four stars makes sense.



ALSO CONSIDER ?

CYRUS CD 8 SE

★★★★★

£1200  
This Cyrus is CD-only, but delivers timing and dynamic punch the Denon merely hints at

MARANTZ

SA-11S2

★★★★★

£2500  
This elegant machine is a pricier alternative to the Denon. It sounds fine with both CD and SACD, too though it favours refinement over sonic attack

EQUIPMENT RACK  
HI FI RACKS  
PODIUM XL  
★★★★★  
£1050

**↑ FOR**  
Performs very well; modular design; solid build; style

**↓ AGAINST**  
Lack of cable management

**→ VERDICT**  
The XL repeats the stellar performance of the standard Podium but in an accommodating, AV friendly form

## Hi Fi Racks takes a step on Podium

**THE STANDARD PODIUM** came out of nowhere to claim our best hi-fi rack Award in 2009. Now it's the turn of its big brother to try and do the same when it comes to AV.

There are two sizes of Podium XL: the 1400mm width on test here, and a 995mm version. The difference accounts for £100 per tier, with the larger size weighing in at £350 per section.

Like the standard Podium, the XL uses a 40mm thick platform of solid oak. Shelf gaps depend on the height of feet specified: these

can be from 65mm to 200mm. Finish is impressive, with the Podium XL coming across as a well-made piece of furniture.

### Set-up can be fiddly

We do have some criticisms. It's hard to assemble the legs so that they are tightly screwed on and square with the edges. Given the mass of cabling an AV set-up has, we'd also like some thought given to neat cable management.

Otherwise it's all good news. This is a great-performing rack:

we think it sounds even better than the smaller model. There's a little more openness in the midrange and treble, and a touch more articulation low down. By general standards there's far more weight, dynamics and top-end refinement here than most alternatives we've heard.

The Podium XL's size means you can fit up to a 65in TV, three components side-by-side on each shelf, and easily accommodate a large centre speaker. If that suits your needs, look no further.



ALSO CONSIDER ?

ATACAMA

EQUINOX AV

★★★★★

£270  
Our Award winner offers plenty of size and shelf options, from a very reasonable price

QUADRASPIRE

QAVM

★★★★★

£540  
If you like the wooden look but can't spend a grand this Quadraspire rack works well