

# Creek Evolution 100CD CD Player & 100P Power Amplifier

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By Lionel Payne

**Creek Audio Systems have recently introduced their Evolution 100 range and here we have two of the line-up for review – namely the Evolution 100CD (£1350) and the 100P (£1350) which Lionel Payne will review for Hifi Pig**

# CREEK EVOLUTION 100CD CD PLAYER & 100P POWER AMP



The Evolution 100CD is a multi-faceted unit incorporating a CD transport, a digital to analogue converter (DAC), a digital pre-amplifier and also included is a headphone amplifier so you can use it as a preamplifier as well as a CD player...which is very convenient and keeps box numbers down. The 100P is a power amplifier which matches the Evolution 100CD in looks and proportions although it's brushed aluminium fascia carries only one button – for on/off duties. The Evolution 100CD, on the other hand has the on/off button and a further 9 soft-touch buttons plus a volume dial, quarter inch headphone socket, OLED display and a slot for loading your compact discs. It also comes with the requisite remote control unit which will also control other units within the range.

The units both come in black pressed steel cases with brushed aluminium fascias in a choice of black or silver. My

units arrived, double boxed, in the black variety and I would describe their appearance as having an understated elegance. They both have identical dimensions and are a standard width of 430mm and a depth of 280mm and a rather diminutive height of only 60mm. Placed onto the top two tiers of my 5 tier Mana Acoustics amp stand they looked particularly attractive. The OLED display on the 100CD is very impressive. It can be dimmed or completely turned off and even someone like myself with less than ideal sight can clearly see the information provided in both dimmed light and daylight.

The 100P has two pairs of speaker terminals and inputs for unbalanced RCA connections and balanced XLR connections. There is a small button on the rear which you can use to change the inputs on the fly.

## Creek Evolution 100CD

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When I first hooked up the Creek Evolution 100CD with my system I was mildly impressed but far from blown away. Some players that arrive for review will do this and some are “growers” – i.e. they grow on you throughout the audition process. Others may impress you immediately but often this is a short-term thing where what initially impressed can become tiring over the longer term. The Evolution 100CD definitely grew on me throughout its time with me and I will be sorry to see it depart.

I have listened for many hours to both the CD and my Windows 10 PC streaming Tidal in hifi quality through the USB port to the unit’s DAC and the differences in sound quality between the two are fairly insubstantial. If I had to pick out one area that the 100CD really excels in, it would most certainly be the way it deals with voices. It has an uncanny ability to get the very best from all singers of either sex. Listening to Eva Cassidy’s cover version of Sting’s Fields Of Gold produces a silky rendition of organic quality which equally captivates and thrills. However if you move over to some classic rock – namely Deep Purple and Child Of Time from their studio album Deep Purple In Rock, Ian Gillan’s

delivery is captured with every nuance and the performance is equally captivating. Changing over to Bob Marley’s simple but superb Redemption Song left this reviewer in awe of the great man and so impressed with the voicing of this player.

Time after time not only the voicing but also the tonality of the recordings that I was listening to would really strike me to how the 100CD was portraying the perfect harmony of sound where all the instruments can be followed individually and each sounds perfectly correct. Indeed the reproduction of pianos, drums, violins, cellos, clarinets, flutes, etc. are all recreated with great authenticity. This is no easy feat but one the 100CD achieves with aplomb.

Of course the Evolution 100CD is not just a simple CD player, it’s a whole lot more too. It is also a DAC of excellent quality and my attempted description of the sound quality of the CD player stands true for the DAC too, with the variation of the quality of digital input of course.

There are two coaxial inputs via RCA connections plus two optical inputs via Toslink as well as a USB type 2 input all



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supporting up to 24Bit 192kHz conversion. I briefly tried the Bluetooth connection which was a doddle to install and link to my Samsung S7. I was suitably impressed that the sound quality was pretty much identical to the streaming quality I could get from my PC and the USB connection, both of which were utilising Tidal Hifi quality. I should also mention that as I use a PC I had to download the additional driver software, but this was an easy process and I was up and running in minutes.

Listening to my Denon TU-1800DAB tuner through a digital connection to the DAC was also a joy. On Radio 6 Music I found Iggy Pop introducing some of his favourite David Bowie tracks and the DAC definitely improved the overall sound and again highlighted how good its mid-band was, especially reproducing Iggy's tremendously gravelly voice with true veracity.

I also had a late evening session listening to one of my all-time favourite live albums with my Audio Technica AD1000 headphones. I know this double CD probably as well as any in my collection – it's Gil Scott-Heron And His Amnesia Express and my previous comments about the 100CD stood perfectly true while listening through this medium. All areas of the sound were extremely true to life – so much so that I ended up going to bed a lot later

than I anticipated. I'm not going to tell you that I heard new things in the mix, but that night I was astonished at the clarity and extreme low noise floor that I heard. Gil Scott-Heron's "The Bottle" includes a couple of solos, allowing his band to show off their respective talents and the track kept my head bobbing and toes tapping right the way through. The solos of the bass player and the percussionist were a joy to behold. I think it's probably the best presentation I've ever heard of this track and I've heard it many, many times. The following day I couldn't wait to play the same track through my speakers and the result was equally sublime.

## Creek Evolution 100P

Unlike the Evolution 100CD that slowly grew in my affections, I fell under the spell of the Evolution 100P almost immediately. Hooked into my system and driving my Impulse H2 loudspeakers I was beguiled by the speed, clarity and precision that was portrayed before me.

I auditioned the 100P mostly on its own within my system, but also with the 100CD as the source and preamplifier. The 100P performed consistently well throughout the auditions giving an even-handed approach to whatever I threw at it. Listening to Sting's excellent Live In Berlin CD with the Royal Philharmonic

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Concert Orchestra really showed how good the amplifier is at painting a realistic soundstage, as well as reproducing so many different instruments within the orchestra with such veracity. The tracks with Branford Marsalis playing saxophone were a real stand-out, although the CD as a whole really impressed, highlighting the excellent work Deutsche Grammophon carried out in the recording process.

Playing Dead Can Dance In Concert is a good work-out for the lower registers and the 100P showed it can do bass with the best in class. Children Of The Sun is a track that needs firm control from an amplifier to not allow the bass to become overblown within the mix and the 100P passed with flying colours. The bass is quick and controlled, if a touch dry, and overall, the densely layered track is driven on wonderfully with the clarity of vocals from Brendan Perry never getting congested even when I dialled in extra volume to concert levels.

The 100P has a smooth and detailed top end which has not a hint of grain. There is no suggestion whatsoever that this amplifier would become tiring in the longer term. It had me reaching for one CD after another to feed into the slot-loader, and it never failed to impress and entertain. Much like the 100CD I would say its outstanding characteristic is the way it is voiced. Bands and performers that I have played regularly for years have had their lead singers thrown into a brighter spotlight, to the point where I have felt I could almost reach out and touch them.

Everything sounds so natural that it seems petty to look for any drawbacks at all in this price range, but the one area that I feel could be improved is the amps detail retrieval. That is not to say there is anything greatly amiss with the detail offered, but I have heard better, albeit from amplifiers costing far more than a measly £1350.

## Conclusion

Ever since the early eighties when Mike Creek brought the legendary Creek 4040 integrated amplifier to market, Creek Audio Systems have been known for producing items with innovative design and good value for money. The Evolution 100P power amplifier is certainly an innovative design with its class G topology and also represents excellent value for money. It has the ability to conjure a wonderfully deep and wide soundstage and has that great ability to simply sound natural. I can heartily recommend it to any prospective purchasers. It also makes an excellent partner to the Evolution 100CD which, to me, is the star of the show. I have completely enjoyed my time with it and have been thoroughly impressed with, not only its CD playback qualities, but also its abilities with everything directed through the DAC.

It even has an excellent built-in headphone amplifier to boot



## AT A GLANCE

Build Quality: Solidly built and surprisingly small for such a big sound. They have a sleek under-stated elegance.

**Sound Quality:** Both have very special voicing abilities and sound natural and unconstrained.

**Value For Money:** Very good indeed. Both units have to be pushing towards the top of any potential purchaser's list at this price point.

**Pros:**

Excellent voicing and natural un-forced sound  
Powerful sounding power amplifier  
Excellent OLED display readable in all conditions

**Cons :**

Perhaps a lack of analogue inputs to the 100CD  
Not much else

**Price :**

Evolution 100CD £1350

Evolution 100P £1350

## SPECIFICATIONS (100CD)

Digital Inputs: 2 x SPDIF, 24 Bit 192 kHz, transformer isolated. 2 x Toslink, 24 Bit 192 kHz, optically isolated. 1 x USB, 24 Bit 192 kHz

No additional software drivers are needed for OS X  
Windows PCs require additional drivers

1 x Bluetooth input

CD Transport: Custom designed, ICE quality, CD slot-loader, externally clocked

SNR: > 110dBA unbalanced

Digital Output: 1 x SPDIF and 1 x Toslink optical output, pass-on all input signals

Digital Filters: Optional digital filters are selectable via the remote

Analogue Output: 2 x RCA un-balanced, 2.0V RMS. 2 x XLR balanced 4.0V RMS

Headphone Output: 1 x 6.35mm or 1/4" Jack socket Output Impedance

Output Impedance: 47 Ohms

Power Supply: 30 Watt toroidal mains transformer with 3 separate secondary voltage windings, with multi-cap power supply decoupling and multiple ultra-low noise discrete power supply voltage regulators.

## SPECIFICATIONS (100P)

Power Output: >110 Watts into 8 Ohms

Power Output: >170 Watts into 4 Ohms

Continuous Current: >8.5 Amps (sine wave)

Max Current : >26 Amps, current burst into 0.5 Ohms

Output Impedance <0.05 Ohms @ 1KHz

THD: < 0.02% 20Hz – 20KHz

SNR: > 102dB

Frequency Response: 10Hz – 100KHz +/- 2dB Line

Gain: 33.3dB (x46)

Input Sensitivity: 650mV

Crosstalk: - 80dB at 1KHz

DC Offset: < +/- 10mV

Slew Rate: > 30 V per uS

Inputs : RCA unbalanced – XLR balanced

Outputs: 2 pairs of binding posts

Operating Voltages: 110V / 230V Switchable

Consumption (at idle): < 20 Watts (no standby)

Consumption: 500 Watts (at full power)

Weight: 9kgs

Dimensions W/H/D: 430 x 60 x 280mm