

## OPPO BDP-105D Audiocom Signature player

by Alan Sircom

**T**he first rule of hot-rodding is “start from a good base.” Working with an already excellent donor product gives one a canvas upon which great things can be based. Sadly, that maxim seems entirely lost on a neighbour’s son, who seems intent on ‘pimping up’ a clapped-out Vauxhall Nova, but Audiocom has taken the idea to heart. The company takes the very well respected OPPO multistandard disc platform and uses it as a basis for its own transformations, in this case creating the OPPO BDP-105D Audiocom Signature.

This is not unheard of, but Audiocom plays it very honestly. The company does not try to hoodwink people by rebadging and repackaging the OPPO player, and it definitely doesn’t try to pass off limited modifications as major changes. Bigger brands than Audiocom have been caught playing that game before, and it ends badly. Instead, Audiocom has been extremely honest about what it does to the OPPO model upon which the mods are based.

This is also Audiocom’s top of the range disc player. All of Audiocom’s players are now geared as much for video as they are for audio: a reflection of the changes in the audio market away from physical digital media. Despite reports to the contrary, CD and SACD are not ‘dead,’ but sales of players are in the doldrums and new music-only players are a rare sight. In such a marketplace, OPPO is one of the exceptions. Fortunately for end users, OPPO make a truly universal platform that delivers both audio and video to a very high quality right out of the box. And fortunately for companies using this as a base of operations, there’s still untapped

performance in the OPPO platform that can be extracted, if you think it an audiophile device and develop important sections. These improvements are not the kind of upgrades OPPO would put on its own devices *per se*, because they would significantly increase the price of the player, but this gives high-end brands and modding companies like Audiocom some room for manoeuvre.

Describing the base OPPO’s performance is either extremely simple, or extremely long-winded. The simple version is ‘it plays virtually every digital audio or video format you can think of (except maybe LaserDisc), and does most of them extremely well’. The long-winded version is just a list of those audio and video formats. It’s best to think of the OPPO as a complete digital hub device, with a disc drawer on the front panel and loads of digital inputs on the back panel, plus space for a Wi-Fi dongle. It’s also highly consistent in performance, turning in top-class performance as much when playing DVD-Audio discs as it does with upscaling Blu-ray to 4K. For the record, the ‘D’ suffix in the name is short for Darbee Visual image enhancement. The one weak point in OPPO’s content wrangling is the handling of files streamed through Ethernet. The good news is current models now include gapless replay, but the MediaControl iOS or Android app for controlling the player is still arguably something of a weak link in an otherwise very strong chain, and other apps (such as PlugPlayer) have more powerful UPnP/DLNA control. However, this is more a ‘room for improvement’ criticism, than a ‘it can’t be done’ gripe, and I suspect that as UPnP streaming becomes more universally and internationally adopted, the BDP-105D will have firmware and app upgrades.

Audiocom takes this already fine platform, and adds significant upgrades. These include replacing the standard PSU with a custom designed linear power supply, with multiple regulated supply taps, improved mains purification (using the kind of filtration seen in Quantum boxes), the replacement of the two main clocks in the system (the main processing circuit now sports Audiocom’s 77 Femtosecond Reference clock, while the analogue audio stages feature the company’s new 37 Femtosecond Reference Audio clock to drive the ESS9018 Sabre DACs in the OPPO circuit). Audiocom also uses selected audio-grade components in the important parts of the analogue audio stage and finally improves the mechanical and electrical isolation between stages, which is useful because the inside of a Blu-ray player competes with the inside of a computer as one of the most EMI-polluted places to deliver audio. There’s

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several GHz of stray EMI floating round a typical player: OPPO does a good job in keeping this in check as standard (part of the reason OPPO players are so well liked), but Audiocom improves on this.

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the detail stakes too. That puts it in among the big boys of digital audio. And best of all, the further up the digital resolution scale you go, you just get more of the same. Good SACDs and DVD-Audio discs (remember them?) sound better than CD versions of the same (although this meant having to dig out old Randy Newman, Yes, Pink Floyd and Rolling Stones albums for comparison purposes), but there is no great shift in tone, texture or detail between the formats. Interestingly though, arguably the most fascinating sound from the whole player came from playing .WAV versions of Red Book CD tracks ripped to a USB stick. Comparing .WAV vs. CD versions of Nick Cave on ‘Higgs Boson Blues’ [*Push The Sky Away* CD, Bad Seed Ltd] showed the USB input to offer a temporal correctness and precision that spinning disc lacked. In fairness, you need to go very far up the CD transport ladder to find anything better.

There are specific places where other players score higher points. The Audiocom OPPO is going to sound a touch insipid compared to a good Naim CD player in an all-Naim system, for example. Moreover, if you are trying to find a cheap version of a dCS Vivaldi stack, there isn’t one. Instead, the breathed-upon OPPO just adds another fine voice in the £10,000-£15,000 player market. Someone just forgot to multiply the price by about five, and we get the benefit.

The problem for a magazine like *Hi-Fi+* is that many of Audiocom’s improvements to the



## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

**Type:** Solid-state universal/Blu-ray disc player and DAC.

**Disc Types:** BD-Video and Blu-ray 3D (BD Profile BD-ROM version 2.5), DVD-Video, DVD-Audio, AVCHD, SACD, CD, HDCD, Kodak Picture CD, CD-R/RW, DVD±R/RW, DVD±R DL, BD-R/RE

**Internal Storage:** 1GB

**Digital Inputs:** Two S/PDIF inputs (one coaxial, one optical), three USB 2.0 inputs, two HDMI inputs, three dedicated DAC inputs (one coaxial, one optical, and one asynchronous USB), one Ethernet port (RJ-45), one Wi-Fi port (via USB dongle).

**Analogue Outputs:** One 7.1-channel analogue audio output (via RCA jacks), two stereo analogue audio outputs (one set balanced via XLRs, one set single-ended via RCA jacks), one headphone output (via 6.35mm headphone jack).

**Digital Outputs:** Two digital audio outputs (one coaxial, one optical), two HDMI outputs.

**DAC Resolution:** (USB Audio) two channels @ DSD 26/128 (5.6448MHz)  
Frequency response: 26Hz – 30kHz

**Distortion:** <0.0003% (1kHz at 48k/24b, 0dBFS, 20kHz LPF), <0.0017% (1kHz at 44.1k/16b, 0dBFS, 20kHz LPF, <0.01% into 600 Ohms (1kHz at 48k/24b, 0dBFS, 20kHz LPF, Headphone Amplifier)

**Signal to Noise Ratio:** >115dB

**Dimensions (HxWxD):** 123 x 430 x 311mm

**Weight:** 7.9kg

**Price:** £1,099 (std), £3,399 (modified)

**Original Manufacturer/UK Distributor:**  
Oppo BD UK, Ltd.

**URL:** [www.oppo-bluray.co.uk](http://www.oppo-bluray.co.uk)

**Modifiers:** Audiocom International Ltd

**URL:** [www.audiocominternational.com](http://www.audiocominternational.com)

**Tel:** +44(0)1646 650046

OPPO are on the video side. Which means we need to cross the audiophile Rubicon and discuss picture quality. Fortunately, that can be expressed in short order, because what it does to audio, it also does to video. There's greater depth and detail to the picture, presenting strongly saturated colours when called upon to do so and more muted shades with equal aplomb. It's not fazed by fast moving action sequences and the *bête noir* of any digital player (a field of grass blowing in the wind can turn into a field of green squares moving around a screen) is handled as if there is processing to spare. In truth, the performance of the base OPPO exceeds the picture quality scope of my Sony Bravia (we are talking upscaling to 4K with ease, and my screen is not a 4K screen), but even here the improvements over ordinary Blu-ray players was easy to spot. Upscaling DVD was particular strong, as it is in the base model.

Audiocom has nowhere to hide. It supplies standard-issue OPPO BDP-105D models, and provides performance-enhancement kits to bring existing OPPO owners products up to Signature standard, as well as supplying the Signature as a complete package. If the improvements weren't both audible and visible on a fairly deep level, Audiocom's customer base would rumble this quickly. Fortunately, the Signature improvements take that already good OPPO platform and transform it into a truly world-class player. In a good system, the Audiocom Signature version of the OPPO BDP-105D offers picture and sound quality on a par with a very lofty peer group. Highly recommended. +

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