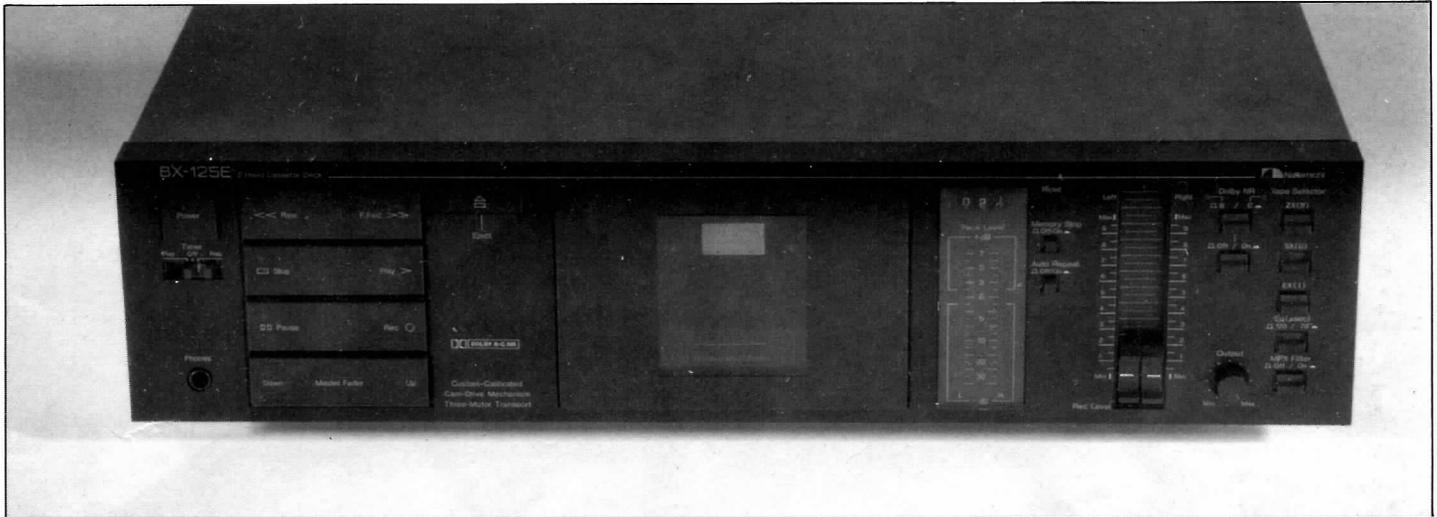


NAKAMICHI BX-100/125

£345/£395

B&W NAKAMICHI LIMITED

MARLBOROUGH ROAD, LANCING, WEST SUSSEX BN15 8TR
TEL: 0903 750750



The BX-125 is, in essence, Nakamichi's idea of what a decent conventional cassette deck should be like. Only its price is unconventional - a mere £400!

For this, one gets Nakamichi standards of smoothness and silence, both in control action and transport operation. They're a healthy step above the norm., but perhaps they should be. Light-action touch plates linked into electronic logic circuits need just a casual tap to convey a command. The transport reacts swiftly and silently.

As always with Nakamichis, bias and equalisation are separately selected by individual push-buttons. Together with Dolby B and C (BX-125 only), this adds up to a lot of buttons to press when changing tape types. The tape counter is a simple mechanical affair, but with a useful zero-stop memory.

The BX-100 has only Dolby B, but modern tapes are quiet enough for it. To preserve transients and "attack" in particular, plus a sense of openness, B-type hiss reduction is preferable to C by a significant margin, making the BX-100 a valid choice for hi-fi recording.

SOUND QUALITY

Metal tape (TDK MA-X) displayed very neutral tonal balance. Even at conservative record levels there was some softening out of transients, with consequent deterioration in the sense of definition. A notably

cohesive presentation was due, I suspect, to a wide, peak free response characteristic. Metal recordings reached a very high standard.

A Chopin piano Nocturne was reproduced cleanly and with little sign of drunkenness of pitch or wiriness from capstan wow. There was some slight wateriness of pitch however, possibly from distributed wow.

Chrome tape (Maxell XL-II) suffered some treble splash on strong cymbals crashes and the like. There was softening of transient attack also, plus a little thinness in the sound, caused by slight treble emphasis. Bass quality proved fulsome and rumbled along ominously. Clarity was generally good and, on the whole, the '125 made a good job of recording with chrome.

Results were similar with TDK AD ferric tape. It also sounded extremely neutral tonally, whilst having the usual grainy treble quality of ferrics. There was a fine sense of clarity, reasonably well preserved transients and relatively un-muddled treble, as ferric goes.

As always on Nakamichis, pre-recorded tapes were transformed. Strong, well defined bass and clear, extended treble produced a large, open sound and sharp imaging quite beyond that of most other cassette decks. This aspect of the '125 was excellent.

SUMMARY

With careful tape choice the BX-

125 produces fine results. The BX-100 Dolby B-only is probably better value for those who don't mind just slight background hiss. These Nakamich's (100/

125) are expensive though, Denon and Aiwa models are equivalent price being better in some areas, if not all.

TEST RESULTS

REPLAY (pre-recorded tapes)
frequency response (-2dB) 30Hz - 20kHz
speed accuracy +0.6%
hiss (70uS, Dolby out) -59dB

RECORDING (blank tapes)
frequency response (IEC Primary Refs.)
ferric (IEC I) 20Hz - 18kHz
chrome (IEC II) 20Hz - 18kHz
metal (IEC IV) 20Hz - 19kHz
separation (1kHz) -51dB
distortion (315Hz) 0.4%
hiss (70uS, Dolby out) -56dB
speed variations (DIN total) 0.06%
modulation noise (1k-3k) -41dB
flutter energy (3k-31.3k) -33dB

MOL/SAT (IEC Primary Refs) 315 / 10k
IEC I (ferric) +2.5dB / -6dB
IEC II (chrome) 0dB / -7dB
IEC IV (metal) +4dB / -0.5dB

TECHNICAL PERFORMANCE

As the replay response graph shows, Nakamichi give their budget models much the same broad, extended frequency response characteristic as their expensive ones, allowing pre-recorded tapes to come over with much the same enhanced sound.

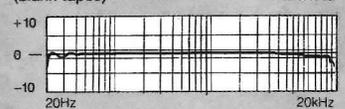
The recording responses are even flatter than those of the BX-300 and this made tape matching easier. The trace for metal is shown in the graph, where extended treble and smooth, lump-free bass are obvious. TDK AD ferric, Maxell XL-II chrome and TDK MA-X metal all worked well with the BX-125. The speed analysis, Fig 1, clearly shows that there was little flutter, as the band-energy figure of -33dB confirms.

This aids clarity and smoothness, but some low rate wow (0.06%) and drift (0.1%) are discernable, which had some impact upon sound quality.

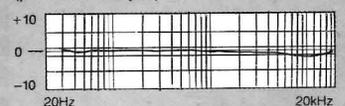
The head provides a broad, flat frequency response characteristic free from serious low frequency perturbations (head contour effect). Distortion proved low. Overload ceilings were respectable, but not exceptional at the price.

The BX-125 proved comprehensively well engineered. It is expensive, but lack of real weak spots still makes its price justifiable.

RECORDING FREQUENCY RESPONSE (blank tapes)



REPLAY FREQUENCY RESPONSE (pre-recorded tapes)



FLUTTER & WOW

