



REVIEW

METRONOME – Le Player 4 and Le DAC 2 in duo

In collaboration with its commercial partners across the five continents, Métronome Technologie offers new products that always embody the pinnacle of technology and quality. In the Classica series, Le Player 4, a CD transport (and upsampler), as well as Le DAC 2, a digital-to-analog converter, stand as flagship models. Both are housed in a robust 2mm thick steel chassis, with a 10mm solid aluminum alloy front panel. At the front, a blue screen adds a refined touch to their high-end design. These products illustrate the highest quality construction. Together or separately, Le Player and Le DAC are appealing with their minimalist and elegant look, designed for enthusiasts of fine finishes.

Le Player 4 represents a bold choice by Métronome Technologie, offering music lovers who are loyal to physical media a device with rare features, ensuring that the CD does not fall into the forgetfulness of sound history. This top-loading CD transport and upsampler focuses solely on optimal playback of disc content, with a sampling

capacity of up to DSD 128. Lacking an integrated digital-to-analog converter, it transmits signals to the Le DAC 2, which handles the processing.

Le Player 4, without an integrated DAC, extracts information from CDs and upscales it to DSD 128. In the Classica series, this model also introduces a major innovation: a streaming option directly integrated, particularly effective. Métronome Technologie uses the mconnect player, a multimedia player app compatible with UPnP/DLNA and Google Cast (Chromecast) protocols. While functional and efficient, the mconnect Player service falls short of the comfort and precision offered by Roon.

At the time when the SACD format market was at its peak, many audio manufacturers invested in this trend, offering optical players ranging from entry-level models to high-end devices. Métronome, true to its character and French approach, never followed this path. Over the years, with the classic Philips CDM Pro mechanism, specialized in pure CD players, the brand focused all its efforts on CD playback. Neither the popularity of SACD nor market trends shook its positioning, which earned it an ever-growing fan base.

The introduction of the AQWO marked Métronome's entry into the SACD world. This development represented an important step in its journey, a logical evolution that has clearly reached a new





significant milestone today.

The Player 4 incorporates two toroidal transformers in its power supply, accompanied by Schaffner filters and four distinct and independent regulation systems. Its exclusive power supply, equipped with rectification, stabilization, and filtering functions, far exceeds the performance of previous models.

The reading mechanism, a SUOS modified by Métronome, favors a robust top-loading design. To maintain optimal rotational stability and eliminate resonances, the disc is held in place by a lightweight magnetic disc. The digital outputs include SPDIF (RCA 75 Ohms), AES/EBU (XLR 110 Ohms), and HDMI. Among them, the I²S HDMI interface (DSD/PCM) stands out for its advanced capabilities. With its built-in upsampler and streaming module, Le Player 4 can be the sole high-level audiophile digital source in an audio chain.

As for the Le Player 4+, it offers exceptional build quality, excellent connectivity, digital streaming capabilities, and remarkable signal management, all in a single, unified chassis.

The question of whether yesterday's and today's CD technology allows for a digital-to-analog conversion with a higher sampling rate and resolution is a legitimate one. With direct conversion, significant improvements are limited. However, by processing weak signals digitally using

computational methods, it is possible to achieve a more complex conversion, with a higher sampling rate and reduced margin of error.

- *One of the unique aspects of this approach is that it can*

reduce noise and distortion, even with lower resolution. Can a signal with higher parameters than those of a direct converter be obtained from a series of 44.1 kHz/16-bit data? The answer is yes, and it is interesting to note that some of the processing techniques used here are also employed in high-resolution analog-to-digital converters.

- *Three main improvements are expected:*
- *Increase in sampling rate.*
- *Improvement in resolution.*
- *More linear and noise-free transmission of signals.*

To achieve these objectives, advanced converters combine several signal processing methods, including:

- *Oversampling: This technique multiplies the sampling frequency by a power of two (2x, 4x, 8x... up to 256x, 512x, 1024x) using an oversampling filter.*
- *Noise shaping: It redistributes the noise to minimize its audible impact.*
- *Dithering: This method introduces controlled noise to smooth out quantization errors.*

These processes allow for better sound fidelity while optimizing the

performance of digital signals extracted from CDs, thus pushing the limits of classical technology.

And what are the advantages of using a top-loading mechanism? It provides a sensation similar to that of playing vinyl records, offering the intimacy typical of LP playback. In reality, this adds extra value. The biggest advantage of the top-loading mechanism is that there is no need for drawers, trays, or other front-loading mechanical devices, and it also eliminates the mechanical movement of raising the disk. The mounting of the head is also different. The number of moving parts and movements is significantly reduced, which not only reduces unnecessary vibrations of moving parts and mechanical vibration interference but also significantly improves overall reliability and durability. The high rigidity and stability of the disk weight, developed by Métronome, reduces disk vibrations, thereby improving the relationship between rotation and speed variations, effectively reducing the load on the servo circuit, and improving the precision stability from signal reading to transmission.

The DAC 2 is Métronome's high-end digital-to-analog converter, specifically designed to pair with the Le Player 4. Unsurprisingly, it adopts the same elegant and minimalist aesthetic. The front panel of the DAC 2 is similar to that of the Le Player 4, sharing a 2 mm steel chassis and a 10 mm solid aluminum front panel. It is also equipped with a screen of comparable size, along



with intuitive touch buttons for navigating the menu options.

Designed for audiophile purists seeking High-End sound reproduction, the DAC 2 supports PCM files up to 384 kHz and DSD files up to DSD 512 (DSD x8). With each generation, the electronics have been refined to ensure sound quality that fully meets the demands of audiophiles, in every aspect.

The DAC 2 adopts a dual-mono architecture, starting from the power supply. Two toroidal transformers provide regulated voltage to six independent sections, while integrating EMI and RFI filters for optimal performance. The conversion of digital signals is handled by a stereo converter based on the ESS ES9026Pro chip.

All inputs accept signals with sampling frequencies ranging from 44.1 to 192 kHz. The connectors include SPDIF (RCA 75 Ohms), AES/EBU (XLR 110 Ohms), Toslink optical, HDMI, and USB type B, all capable of receiving PCM and DSD signals from 44.1 to 384 kHz. A 32-bit processor handles signal flows within a frequency range of 211 to

automatic, making installation simple and intuitive.

Métronome has integrated a fully balanced, dual-mono architecture into a single chassis, utilizing the finest multilayer components and circuit board layouts. This design ensures impressive amplification, precise voltage stabilization, and exceptional power.

The analog stage operates in Class A, with a bandwidth of 10 Hz to 20,000 Hz (+/- 0.1 dB). The DAC offers a dynamic range of up to 175 dB, with combined distortion and noise reaching -140 dB. Two analog output options are available:

- An unbalanced RCA pair (3 V RMS @ 0 dB, 47 kOhms).
- A balanced XLR pair (3 V RMS @ 0 dB, 600 Ohms).

Both devices are equipped with adjustable conical Delrin feet, designed to minimize and effectively dissipate any potential resonances.

Listening

The "brilliant" aesthetic of both products and their elegance perfectly complement their exceptional sound quality. The top-load mechanism is easily adjustable, offering a pleasant user experience. The

blue LED screen is clear and makes it easy to read data, allowing for quick selection of specific sections of tracks on discs with many tracks.

Before listening, it is essential to choose the digital transmission interface format, in addition to the usual setup of wiring and

amplifier. The player and the DAC were initially wired between the HDMI I²S interface and AES/EBU. After several attempts to select, it became clear that, although the PCM signals from the CD are in 16-bit / 44.1 kHz,



upscaling and signal transmission through the HDMI I²S cable have a significant impact on sound quality. (It is worth noting that DSD signals from SACD can only be transmitted via HDMI.)

Both devices from Métronome Technologie provide sound reproduction that is almost free of coloration, light, and highly detailed. The CD playback, through quality adjustments, delivers the best possible digital data stream, with each step of the upscaling showing a notable difference, audibly perceived compared to the previous one. The amount of detail is undeniable, with characteristics that stand out in a smooth, solid, and captivating way. Nothing dominates the presentation across the full frequency range. The sound character is subtle. The Le Player 4, even with basic sampling, delivers flexible textures, a lot of air, a natural image, and an appealing finesse.

A very important characteristic is the spatial representation of sounds, groups of instruments, choirs, and the recording location itself. All these elements are presented in an extremely detailed manner, without any frequencies feeling forced, offering an airy, tonal, and balanced reproduction with an impulsive sound. The key point: a balanced and captivating sound, with no resonance or



768 kHz for both PCM and DSD formats.

The I²S input via HDMI is specifically dedicated to processing signals from SACD discs, while the USB input requires a driver only for Windows devices. For macOS or Linux users, detection is



harshness.

When playing classic jazz music, the digital transmission via the streaming option stands out for its clarity and transparency, practically identical to that of the corresponding CD recordings, while offering a more analog-like sound. It perfectly captures the rhythmic subtlety, momentum, and engaging energy of the tracks. Each disc or file is played with a purity, coherence, and transparency of reference level, delivering impeccable musical quality. The beauty and French sensitivity are clearly present in this magnificent sound. During upscaling (up to a certain point), the amount of information increases significantly, the timbres become clearer, and the energy in the music seems to continuously expand.

When playing CD/SACD recordings of exceptional quality or high-quality digital files, the device delivers a subtle lightness and a musically attractive sound. Human intuition, emotional sensation, and the fluid, dynamic rhythm of the music create very enjoyable feelings. The details are more numerous and clearer in the softer sounds, and the instant contrast between loud and soft sounds is more pronounced. The texture of different acoustic instruments is more significant, the distance between low and high frequencies is greater, and the reproduction of a large symphonic orchestra is also enhanced. The voice on SACD becomes significantly more exciting, with richer, more powerful low

frequencies and an expanded soundstage.

When using the I²S HDMI connection, the precision is significantly better than with AES/EBU, and the temporal base distortion is lower.

AES/EBU can only transmit digital streams at 24-bit/96 kHz, while higher sampling rate streams must be transmitted via I²S (using an HDMI cable). Even when 16/44.1 digital streams are transmitted, I²S seems to handle the signals better, offering more details, better focus, increased clarity, and richer low frequencies. Make no mistake, AES/EBU also delivers a lively and dynamic sound, but when there's a competition between two masters, there's always a winner. The sound is as transparent as a clear sky after rain, with an equally clean and silent background, regardless of the winner or loser.

The concert recording has a bit more room reverberation compared to the balanced connection. It's as if we are in the same concert hall, but seated closer to the orchestra.

In the early days of the digital world, music offered little, characterized by dull textures, a

two-dimensional soundstage, synthetic coloration, and a lack of true tonalities. These recordings are now listened to as curiosities, while we focus more on perfectly crafted recordings and CDs. Thankfully, these devices recreate music from digital signals with remarkable ease and naturalness. The audio system set up, whether providing light entertainment or a deeper musical experience, integrates perfectly on the sonic level.

CONCLUSION

Audiophile music enthusiasts continue to use their CD collections, sometimes for years, and still purchase new copies – it seems that this format remains widely appreciated. One must not underestimate the appeal of the listening rituals of the late 20th century, with their physical media and paper booklets.

The combination of reliable top-loading players allows Métronome to preserve its reputation as a brand while achieving new successes. However, it makes sense for this French brand to also incorporate streaming options into its devices. This is the best proof of modern times! The Classica models, Le Player 4 and DAC 2, ensure the brand's legendary craftsmanship as well as exceptional audiophile performance. This combination is clear, precise, and beautiful. These



two devices should be purchased together, as they complement each other perfectly – they seem made for each other. Additionally, Métronome Technologie's engineers and management aim to maintain strong relationships with their local distributors to offer their customers cutting-edge technological solutions.

The Pros

- Superior build quality: Robust materials and impeccable finishing ensure durability and exceptional aesthetics.
- Directly integrated streaming option: Enjoy modern connectivity for seamless playback and superior audio quality without compromise.
- Upsampling the original sampling rate: The system upsamples audio by multiplying the original sampling rate by 2, 4, 8... up to 256, 512, or even 1024, delivering more precise and detailed sound reproduction.
- Le Player 4 CD player and Le DAC 2: Highly recommended for their exceptional sound performance, these two devices complement each other perfectly for a high-end audio experience.

The Cons

- The mconnect Player service is less user-friendly than Roon.

