



EXCEPTION

METRONOME **LE PLAYER 4 & LE DAC 2**

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The Enduring Pursuit of Excellence

Like a producer of fine terroir-based products, some values of this prestigious brand share a heritage of representation that drives the cultivation of excellence. In an era of constant revolutions, this return to roots is reassuring, with Métronome more present than ever.

However, the technological soil that the brand exploits is never left fallow. The semi-finished products market is a landscape plagued by obsolescence, where certain electronic components inevitably disappear from the industry. The evolution of such technological foundations can challenge the very materials artisans use to build their identity. Thus, the new generation of Métronome's Classica range products is founded on the necessity of skillfully leveraging key components born of innovation. In this context, genius emerges through disruption, keeping heritage alive.

E X C E P T I O N

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TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

Le Player 4 is a top-loading CD transport with upsampling capabilities but no built-in DAC (only the 4+ version includes this feature). Both versions can integrate an optional streaming module. The 4, tested here without the option, features an elegant 2 mm steel chassis with a 10 mm aluminum front panel, ensuring flawless mechanical rigidity and the best machining and assembly quality.

All components are of high, if not the highest, quality. The new in-house modified SUOS mechanism replaces the older Philips Gyr Falcon 8, which was less optimization-friendly and is now discontinued. Digital outputs are available via RCA, XLR, and I2S signals through HDMI, transmitting PCM data up to 24-bit/384 kHz to a dedicated external DAC.

Le DAC 2 perfectly complements Le Player, offering analog conversion for DSD files up to 512 and PCM files up to 384 kHz. It uses an ESS conversion processor, surpassing the AKM chip of the previous generation, which is no longer available. The chassis adheres to the same high technical standards as the rest of the Classica range.

The DAC provides the five digital inputs corresponding to those of Le Player. Additionally, it supports wired connections to a NAS or computer via an asynchronous USB input.

The brushed aluminum front panels (10 mm thick) frame the devices' digital displays (touchscreen for Le DAC 2), offering excellent readability both up close and at a distance. The ergonomic design mirrors the aesthetic: simple yet effective.

SPECIFICATIONS

Origin: France

Le Player 4

Price: €7,700 (without streaming option), €9,500 (with streaming option)

Finishes: Black or Silver

Dimensions (WxHxD): 450 x 115 x 435 mm

Weight: 11 kg

Digital Outputs:

S/PDIF 75 ohms (RCA connector)

AES/EBU 110 ohms (XLR connector)

Optical (Toslink connector)

HDMI (I2S signal)

Le DAC 2

Price: €6,990

Finishes: Black or Silver

Dimensions (WxHxD): 425 x 130 x 415 mm

Weight: 12 kg

Digital Inputs: 44.1 to 192 kHz

S/PDIF 75 ohms (RCA connector)

AES/EBU 110 ohms (XLR connector)

HDMI (I2S signals)

USB Type B (PCM and DSM signals from 44.1 to 384 kHz)

Le Player and Le DAC share MétroNOME's meticulous approach to power supply design, utilizing no fewer than two toroidal transformers with four and six separate regulation lines, respectively. This setup promises a colossal energy reserve, which will undoubtedly make an audible impact.

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Timbre: From the outset, we identify the shared character of what we will describe here as a "French sound," arguably one of the most beautiful there is. It is marked by the drastic absence of coloration, favoring balance and transparency—the archetype of neutrality. This supports a sensitive connection to reality, avoiding any superfluous embellishments. This creates a nearly cultural benchmark of realism.

Thus, the elegance of musical reproduction, however tempting it may be, is not the result of a flattering rendering but rather of uncompromising transparency, genuine clarity, and a richness of tone without deceit. This listening experience invites curiosity, fulfilling the expectation of perceiving all the details of a recording. In other words, if you want to know how your disc truly sounds, you will hear everything clearly.

However, this precision does not come at the expense of musicality. The music is not anesthetized by any surgical intervention. There is

no stripped-down sound or scalpel-like precision here. Instead, regardless of the instrument or register, the harmonic richness remains full of energy, complete across frequencies. It lives, in essence, breathing authenticity through the accuracy of its timbre, generously delivered at every moment.

Dynamics: We delve into true high-fidelity, capable of reproducing both the widest and the most subtle dynamic ranges. Since human psychophysiological limits prevent us from fully grasping everything at any given moment, our auditory focus allows us to revisit the same musical piece without fatigue, experiencing the exhilarating sensation of rediscovering our classics with each listen.

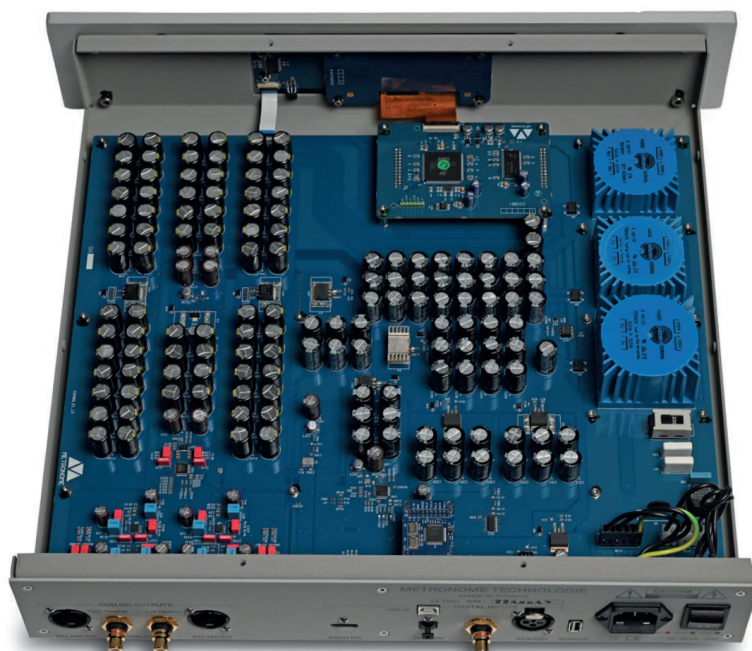
The reproduction is rich enough to provide multiple layers of engagement, including the remarkable ability to isolate each instrument's pitch

effortlessly, both in depth and width. Thus, without compromising the complexity of the recording, the clarity across ranges eliminates any sense of compression, fostering an impression of spontaneity, speed, and, when the music demands it, breathtaking freedom.

The balance unfolds naturally, impressing without showmanship. The highs extend effortlessly, without aggression.

The bass extends deeply, without heaviness or simplification, eliminating any form of redundancy. From the attack of the notes, with its lightning-fast speed, to the most delicate and slow decay, the playback of the recording ensures nothing is missed and offers a perfect variety of movements.

The absence of cognitive interpretation by the listener creates a feeling of calm, a serene listening experience, even as the musicians unleash their energy.



The original design of the DAC visually showcases a robust setup of three encapsulated toroidal transformers, complemented by an impressive array of capacitors dedicated to six independent regulation lines.

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Soundstage: Thanks to the meeting of some talents, a beautiful piece of music, grand playing, and excellent recording work, at the end of the chain, facing the speakers, after pressing play, the sound capture imposes itself like magic. From active listeners, we shift helplessly to the state of spectators, as if we were "caught" by the sound, or stunned by so much music unfolding before us. It becomes clear that the credibility of the sound panorama is established in three dimensions. The precise spatial positioning of the musicians, the layering of planes in depth—only sight is missing to fully visualize them. The grip of this stereo life intensifies with live concerts, transforming the pleasure of listening into a true sensory escape.

Value for Money: Accessing the Classica entry-level range is based on a fundamentally important and demanding prerequisite: it grants immediate entry into the realm of true

high-fidelity. A dizzying platform of expertise, materialized through the use of the finest components, exclusively assembled and manufactured locally. This approach preserves the visible pleasure of a classy and timeless finish, while softening the unavoidable experience when the best resources support the ambitions of passion. Ergonomics also plays a key role in enhancing the tactile experience. Ultimately, it ensures the accuracy of musicality. Suffice to say, all of this comes at a high price, which is not accessible to many. From this noble rigor, the price reflects an economic reality as well.

VERDICT

The challenge imposed by the major technological changes, handled with Métronome's expertise, results in the Classica Le Player 4 and Le DAC 2, new-generation products that nevertheless preserve the essence of the brand by

elevating technical constraints. The two combine wonderfully to achieve a level of transparency that is highly enviable, even at this price, and certainly surpasses many serious competitive offerings. What a pleasure it is to listen to clear music with a constant sense of accuracy, precision, and naturalness all at once. The balance is established with a high informational power about the quality of the recordings, without diminishing the emotion, rhythm, or the sense of rediscovered truth. Yes, it's truly impressive. Bravo!

Laurent Morville

The connectors of the digital outputs of Le Player 4, in RCA or XLR, utilize the resolution of the Le DAC 2, which is rated at 32 bits, 768 kHz in dual-mono, paired with the analog outputs (RCA or XLR) biased in class A

