

fairaudio's
favourite

AWARD
2024

HIFI-TEST

Test: Métronome DSS 2 | Streaming-Bridge

Distinguiert natürlich

von MICHAEL BRUSS | 12. SEPTEMBER 2023

fairaudio

klare worte. guter ton.



REVIEW

MÉTRONOME – DSS 2

Tik-Tok... No, this Métronome has nothing to do with social media. Here, it's not about ephemeral, superficial content with a limited lifespan, like an instant video. Quite the opposite. The Métronome Streamer DSS 2 (€4,590 | Distribution: <https://h-e-a-r.de/>) focuses on understated aesthetics and functional minimalism. Its primary goal: to satisfy its listeners, particularly in terms of acoustics—and for the long haul. In this review, we'll examine whether it succeeds in this mission and how.

The name of the high-end French manufacturer Métronome speaks for itself. Here, everything revolves around precision: left, right—one and zero. Yes, we

are dealing with a confirmed digital specialist operating in ambitious price ranges. The compact DSS 2 streamer, offered at €4,590, serves as the entry point into Métronome's universe, while the DSC network player, designed in the same style but larger, featuring an integrated DAC and preamplification, sits at the other end of the Métronome spectrum with a price of €25,900.

A clear objective: interfaces

As a pure streaming transport, Métronome DSS 2 does not include a built-in DAC.

Consequently, its connectivity is intentionally minimalist. On the input side, DSS 2 offers Wi-Fi connectivity and an Ethernet port for plug-and-play integration into a local network, along with a USB-A port for connecting external storage devices such as hard drives or USB sticks. The DSS 2 supports PCM files up to a maximum resolution of 384 kHz and 32 bits, as well as DSD files up



to DSD256.

On the output side, DSS 2 facilitates connection to a digital-to-analog converter with RCA, XLR (AES/EBU), and HDMI-compatible I2S ports. However, the French team opted not to include a USB digital output.

With I2S, audio data and clock information are transmitted separately, allowing a dedicated line for the master clock.



Additionally, data transfer occurs exclusively in a unidirectional mode. This gives I2S a reputation as a superior connection option in terms of sound quality, thanks to its reduced sensitivity to jitter. However, the main drawback of I2S lies in the lack of a standardized connector type. The Métronome DSS 2 uses the HDMI format for I2S, as, according to the manufacturer, this connection offers excellent electrical properties for this purpose.

The I2S output of DSS 2 can transmit data up to 384 kHz/32 bits and DSD256. Both S/PDIF outputs (coaxial and AES/EBU) also reach 384 kHz/32 bits but are limited to DSD128, which is impressive, considering the S/PDIF standard is officially restricted to 192 kHz/24 bits. Métronome clarifies: "All our devices have supported this rate since 2021 via S/PDIF as well and are compatible with all other manufacturers' devices offering these sampling rate capabilities."

Thanks to DLNA and UPnP, Métronome DSS 2 streamer can also play music stored on the local

network via any compatible app on Apple or Android devices.

Maximum minimalism – the design

The solid steel chassis of Métronome DSS 2 (the removed lid cannot be bent) rests on just three minimally decoupled feet with embedded rubber rings. The front panel is machined from aluminum in a "Monolith" pattern characteristic of the "Digital Sharing" series. The finish is flawless, including inside the unit. The capacitor groups are mounted perfectly aligned—a true dream for those who appreciate organization.

One thing immediately stands out on the

outside—or rather, doesn't stand out: Métronome DSS 2 has no screen. A streamer doesn't really need one, in my opinion. Sure, it's nice to see a high-definition screen display pretty, colorful images, but let's be honest: would you even notice that from three or four meters away? And wouldn't it be wiser not to spend that money on a screen but instead invest it in



sound quality? Not to mention the potential interference the screen could cause, or the effort required to avoid it... Anyway, neither the Innuos Pulsar (€5,490), recently tested by my colleague Ralph Werner, nor my Wavarsa Wstreamer (€1,000) have a screen. The latter even does without the activity indicator found on the two larger streamers. DSS 2, on the other hand, features

a blinking LED in the iconic power symbol form (when disconnected from the network) or a continuous light once a network connection is established.

Technology enhancing sound quality

What can be said about the technology of a streamer in general? Well, it's essential—especially for digital devices—to ensure that the power supply is as stable and clean as possible when it enters the circuits. Since Métronome also remains discreet about these aspects, let's take a look inside and discover a generously sized toroidal transformer (for a purely source device), and above all, an impressive amount of capacitors. This reflects a particular focus on providing a stable and carefully filtered power supply.

Then, there's the clock, both internally and on the output to the digital-to-analog converter. The "Wall of Silence" from France at least opens up a bit here, as it's stated that "... DSS 2 performs a sort of resynchronization of the I2S signals on the streaming board before transmitting them to its digital outputs."

Setting up Métronome DSS 2

The setup is straightforward, especially if you connect the device via LAN. In this case, Métronome DSS 2 automatically appears in the streaming app being used. Apple Music, Roon (after activation in the audio menu), and Qobuz immediately recognize the Métronome as an endpoint—there you go! Those who want to use the streamer via Wi-Fi and set it up this way, due to the lack of a physical connection option, will need to turn to the mcontrol app (not mconnect!) by Conversdigital, available on the Apple AppStore and Google PlayStore. But even this is easy with the latest version of the very comprehensive user manual.

Métronome DSS 2: Listening Test and Comparisons

Anyone who has looked into the subject of the "digital reproduction chain" knows that a streamer has a relatively small impact on the overall sound. But not "none." And, a little spoiler in advance, with solutions like Métronome DSS 2, it quickly becomes clear that even subtle differences in sound can create a significant change in the experience, and that "relative" is, in the end, itself relative.

Test Configurations

I listened to the Métronome

streamer in two test configurations and directly compared it with three fairly different devices. Two of them—the Technics SL-G700 SACD player and network player (€2,500) and the aforementioned Waversa Wstreamer with the optional Waversa WLPS/LP

linear power supply (€500)—are either a bit further apart in terms of price or conceptually different from the Métronome streamer. The third, the already mentioned Innuos Pulsar (€5,500), had the opportunity to be compared with Métronome DSS 2 in my home audio setup after the test conducted by Ralph Werner.

In the realm of taste? A first general assessment

This comparison is particularly interesting because the price difference doesn't necessarily imply an advantage for the Portuguese device. On the contrary, both devices cater to different sound preferences within the realm of subtle differences. While the comparison is made more complex by the fact that the Innuos only has a USB output,

while Métronome DSS 2 does without it, one must also consider the different connection formats and, therefore, the cables (Supra Cables Sword Excalibur USB, around €160, vs Graditech Kide Digital coaxial cable, around €600), which introduces uncertainties and degrees of freedom. However, I can partially extrapolate this through the comparison of the two signal paths via the Waversa Wstreamer, which is equipped with both USB and coaxial outputs. Ultimately, the differing equipment remains a factor that clearly influences the sound, thus limiting the available choices.



The sound differences are a bit more noticeable when compared to the Technics and Waversa devices. In my opinion, my Technics SL-G700 is a relatively unmatched all-rounder (except for its Mark 2 successor, priced at €3,000), delivering the typical Technics family sound: precise, high resolution, tonally rather thin, always focused on accuracy. The Waversa Wstreamer, on the other hand, targets music lovers with slightly darkened highs and rounder transients, aiming to appeal to listeners who don't prioritize micro-details as much overall. Both are clearly outperformed by the much more expensive streamers from Métronome and Innuos, which play in a more objectively neutral, much freer, and more detailed manner, with better-organized soundstages and a wider

projection.

The bass

Métronome DSS 2 proves to be tonally impeccable overall. I don't perceive any tendency towards a warm fullness or a thin, bright clarity. The electronic bass in "Black Shoes" by Felix Laband (album: Dark Days Exit) is almost organically spectral, structured, and linear down to the lowest frequencies. It has exactly the right amount of pressure and firmness, while my Wstreamer reproduces them in a more clumsy and relatively undifferentiated way. The Innuos Pulsar, although just as agile and structured as

Métronome DSS 2, adds a touch of pleasant warmth – which is enjoyable but, in my opinion, less honest. The Technics SL-G700, which in my second setup with the Audio Hungary X200 integrated amplifier (€5,400) and Divine Acoustics Bellatrix speakers (€9,000) is also responsible for converting the signals provided by DSS 2,

lacks a bit of pressure in the electronic bass and the "oomph" of the kick drum in "After Midnight" by Hanne Boel (album: Outtakes). On this track, the Métronome DSS 2 again offers the best balance between impulsiveness and pressure in the bass. The Innuos Pulsar offers slightly richer timbres and is a little more pleasant. The Wstreamer, on the other hand, is again disadvantaged by its relatively flat impulse attack.

Highs, mids, and resolution

When it comes to resolution – especially in the highs – things get really interesting. While the two more expensive devices remain quite close in terms of overall tonality and simply serve different tastes, Métronome DSS 2 takes a qualitative lead in the highs

compared to the Pulsar, offering a simply more open, freer, and more detailed soundstage. And this is achieved without any tonal emphasis in the high frequencies. Compared to the Technics SL-G700, which is not bad in terms of resolution, Métronome DSS 2 almost seems to look at it with pity – and it outright surpasses the Waversa Wstreamer.

What the French streamer Métronome DSS 2 extracts in terms of detail from the signal, without ever seeming too bright, too present, or irritating, is simply phenomenal and ranks among the best in my personal ranking. It's not just the amount of information that DSS 2 manages to extract from tracks like "Bubbles" and "Timbres" by Yosi Horikawa, but also the way it does so. With clear definitions and the necessary sharpness where needed, while remaining airy, delicate, and extremely finely textured where it matters.

In simple terms: Métronome DSS 2 reproduces the highs in an extremely natural and completely stress-free manner. This high resolution and unlimited openness of DSS 2 have – I repeat – nothing to do with treble emphasis. The French streamer simply plays in an extremely detailed and free manner, so even in setups with slightly brighter systems, it should always sound stress-free and clean.

This openness extends into the



mids: as clear and defined, both in terms of articulation and dynamics, I have rarely heard Annette Askvik's voice and the saxophone in "Liberty" from the album of the same name. And in my setup, never. It's important to emphasize, and I risk repeating myself, that beyond the enthusiasm expressed here, these differences are not gigantic, but rather subtle and audible. However, these nuances can have a decisive impact on the overall experience, especially at such a high level where every detail matters.

The voices of Jacintha in "Danny Boy" from the album Here's to Ben, Jarvis Cocker on the brilliant tracks from Room 29, or Brendan Perry in "This Boy" (album Ark) are also perfectly balanced. What sets them apart most is that each retains its unique timbre, while offering remarkable transparency

and impressive immediacy.

The fact that Métronome DSS 2 masters sound colors is clearly demonstrated in "My Favorite Things" in the version by Youn Sun Nah (album Same Girl). The French streamer lets the harmonics of Xavier Desandre-Navarre's percussion float, shine, and radiate so gracefully that it is truly a pleasure to listen to. It is rare to hear the character of a percussion instrument so clearly and naturally, with such a light and open harmonic spectrum – no thick layer of oil paint stifling the subtlety with brutal heaviness.

Transitions and Dynamics

Métronome DSS 2's resolution capability is paired with an absolutely incredible speed and precision in its transient handling. This applies across all frequency ranges, but it is particularly notable in the high frequencies. The electronic tracks by Yosi Horikawa previously mentioned serve as the perfect demo material: they crackle, hiss, sparkle, and radiate exceptionally. A friend of mine, who professionally produces and mixes electronic music, couldn't hide her amazement during her visit: "Amazing, that's incredible!"

In the midrange, Métronome DSS 2 offers comparable speed and presence in the attacks of





synthesizers on "Differently" by Marian Hill, without sacrificing signal power. Some devices tend to neglect one of these elements to emphasize the other psychoacoustically, but DSS 2 manages to enhance each characteristic without compromise. It perfectly balances the liveliness of the transients while maintaining the density and richness of the sound, allowing it to reproduce music in a very natural and engaging way.

Given that the resolution and speed of Métronome DSS 2 are among the highest I know of in this price range, it's hardly surprising that the streamer is also able to reproduce the finest dynamic subtleties – such as those in Chilly Gonzales' piano and Jarvis Cocker's voice on Room 29 – with exemplary clarity, all while remaining remarkably effortless. DSS 2's ability to handle these nuances effortlessly is a testament to its exceptional mastery of dynamics and its ability to reproduce micro-details with impressive precision.

Métronome's engineers resisted the temptation to give DSS 2 physical power through an excessive amount of bass, instead opting for a more demanding approach: combining a neutral bass reproduction with maximum punch in the attack. As a result, the Innuos delivers a kick drum that seems more imposing at first on "This Boy," while the Métronome appears a bit more measured, with a slightly more contained but still precise and

well-defined dynamic. This approach to bass highlights DSS 2's ability to maintain the integrity and subtlety of the signal without giving in to excess.

Is it worse? I'm not

sure—certainly, with my high-capacity ATC SCM50PSL (15,500 euros), I prefer the more refined approach of DSS 2. People with speakers that have less bass might prefer the Pulsar. However, Métronome's streaming transport gains an objective advantage when it comes to managing significant level jumps in the mids and highs, whether for voices or wind instruments. The French unit handles these jumps with such energy that it propels them into the following circuits and drivers, and I can't get enough of it. Again, we remember that these differences are not as pronounced as those observed with amplifiers or even speakers, and they often become noticeable only after extended listening. Nevertheless, it's impressive, and it plays a key role in creating a more intense emotional attachment to the music.

Space and projection

Here now is the third masterstroke of Métronome DSS 2, following its resolution capacity and reproduction of impulses/transients.

Space. Alright, it starts rather at the level of the speakers and

hardly opens towards the listener, unlike the Innuos Pulsar. That's not necessary, as DSS 2 grabs attention with its pure quality—the openness of the soundstage and the amount of detail.

Métronome DSS 2 reproduces the decay of the chimes in "Black Shoes" by Felix Laband deeply in the space behind the speakers. The movement of the artificial sound across the room is rendered by DSS 2 with remarkable fluidity and naturalness: I can almost see the fine sound particles gradually becoming smaller and more attenuated, as if before my mind's eye.

The reproduction of voices and instruments is incredibly tangible and three-dimensional. In "Temptation," Diana Krall is rendered with exceptional precision, perfectly detached and



positioned on the stage, just like the instruments of her accompanying band, which are outlined with surgical clarity. Wow!

In terms of width, the soundstage extends further compared to the Waversa Wstreamer, reaching about the level of the Innuos Pulsar. However, the latter doesn't plunge as deeply into the space in front of the speakers as Métronome DSS 2 and doesn't achieve the same precision in the hierarchy of elements on a very small scale, instead favoring a global harmony.



Once again, Black Shoes provides a perfect example: in the final third of the track, the South African sound wizard places some crispy, sparkling synthetic sounds, alternating between the left and right, very far out and relatively low. The Innuos seems to represent these sounds a bit more smoothly—they evoke more of a flowing water sound—and creates the illusion of a slightly reduced distance between the front and rear rustling on the left side. With the French streamer, I instead feel like I’m hearing a fine granule crackling, each “grain” drawing my attention individually. Moreover, DSS 2 places the "rear" rustling more clearly in the background.

