



音響技術
AUDIOTECHNIQUE

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Métronome AQWO 2 CD/SACD Player + DAC + Streamer 瓣瓣皆精 一聽鍾情

With the constant advancements in digital equipment, streaming playback devices have multiplied in recent years. Choosing among this abundance can be challenging, especially for those with a vast CD collection. For them, the priority when replacing a device remains the sound quality of the CD player, while streaming comes second.

As an experienced audio reviewer, I pay close attention to soundstage, positioning accuracy, transparency, detail, density, bass, and the relationship between sonic signature and musicality. These concepts are deeply ingrained in my mind. However, evaluating the value of an audio device is not based on any absolute rules:

from the user's perspective, it often simply needs to meet their personal needs.

These considerations form the foundation for choosing a new device, and this is how the article highlights the AQWO 2 CD/SACD player from Métronome Technologie.

Love at First Listen

It was during a home visit that I had the opportunity to listen to AQWO 2. Its analog charm immediately captivated me. The vocal emotion was as rich as native DSD, with high sound density, a well-defined three-dimensional soundstage, and exceptional clarity. The violin was crystalline, floating in the air, the upright piano had a soft and fluid timbre, the bass was rich and well-structured, and the

double bass was vibrant and full-bodied. The impact and rebound of the percussion were truly mesmerizing.

Out of curiosity, I checked the cabling and discovered that the host was using American Incredible cables, which I knew well for their neutrality. However, the exceptional sound actually came from AQWO 2's tube output stage. Each channel of the system featured a 6922 tube, and the host had replaced the original tubes with carefully selected ones for optimal sound tuning.

At that moment, I was already considering changing my device. My current CD/SACD player, from the same brand, has been with me for over ten years. Although it has undergone several upgrades, the sound had lost some of its

freshness, and even with optimal tuning, it lacked that touch of emotion that truly captivates the heart. From the very first listen, AQWO 2 won me over.

From the very first track, I was completely captivated. Initially, I was using an Auralic server with a streaming player, which delivered a very clean sound. However, after connecting AQWO 2 via LAN for streaming, the result was even better. If my interest in streaming playback grows in the future, I can always consider upgrading the player. This home visit convinced me to change my equipment.

Product Range

Based on online research, the



the factory before shipment.

Honestly, when you see the additional external power supply and the cost it entails, one might wonder if it's worth it. But in reality, the tube output is the soul of Métronome, and omitting it would be a regrettable loss.

About a month after my order, I received the device

in perfect condition with double-box packaging. AQWO 2 comes with a power supply, a remote control, and a press pad made of Delrin, a polyacetal material known for its high strength, stability, and vibration-damping properties. It helps reduce pressure on the servomechanism circuit and minimizes certain unnecessary interferences in the correction circuit.

to become an independent entity, dedicated to the Hi-End market.

Currently, Métronome offers three product series:

- Classica Series: Designed for beginners.
- Digital Sharing Series: Focused on streaming playback.

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French company Métronome Technologie is likely an expert in the field of digital audio. Founded in 1987, it has always focused on developing CD players. Later, the company experimented with adding vacuum tubes to soften the signal output, thereby offering a more analog sound, a unique characteristic of the brand's CD players.

In 2012, the company was taken over by Jean-Marie Clauzel. Under his leadership, the product range was restructured, and the iconic Kalista brand was separated

- High-End AQWO Series: Includes AQWO 2 (CD/SACD player + DAC + Streamer), AQWO 2+, t|AQWO 2 (SACD transport), and c|AQWO 2 (DAC converter).

An Essential Soul

The tube output stage of the AQWO 2 CD/SACD player is an option that can be added later, either through manual installation or via a dealer. For my part, I ordered the version with the tube output, which is pre-installed at

The press pad has a slight bulge that fits perfectly onto the central axis of the turntable platter. There is also a spiral antenna designed for wireless use.

Design

AQWO 2 weighs 17 kg, with dimensions of 425 mm in depth, 130 mm in height, and 415 mm in width. Its standard size allows it to be easily placed on an audio rack. The chassis is available in silver or black (a gold option is also available).

AQWO 2 uses the longest top-loading tray ever designed by Métronome. The lid opens and closes smoothly, and the playback mechanism is manufactured by D&M in Japan, capable of reading CD/SACD discs. The device is also equipped with a special blue LED lamp, which enhances the accuracy of the laser positioning for improved disc reading.

Visually, AQWO 2 features a sliding top tray design, ensuring reliability and durability while providing excellent stability. The 7-inch color touchscreen at the front offers a sleek and intuitive user interface. It displays information such as the current playing input, track playback time, and much more, providing a pleasant experience.

When streaming, the screen can display information such as bitrate or sampling frequency.

By pressing the top-left corner of the screen, you can access the various settings menus. These include:

Digital: Settings such as signal upsampling (PCM up to 384 kHz; DSD up to 256), SPDIF output in DoP, or full MQA decoding.

DAC: Selection of internal digital filters (8 options) and analog output level (1.4 V/2.5 V/3 V), as well as the activation of the tube output.



Internal View and Electronic Design

By removing the top tray, the internal components of the device are revealed. On the right, there is the

Stream: Selection of display metadata, Wi-Fi settings, gapless playback mode, or display settings (screen brightness, background with 5 different themes).

Other: View the serial number, firmware version, and Streaming Board card number

In summary, all functions are accessible via the touchscreen, making it quick and enjoyable to use, even with the remote control.

AQWO 2 Connection Details

The connections of AQWO 2 are clearly separated into zones. From left to right: main power switch, IEC power input, digital input, including AES/EBU (XLR), S/PDIF (RCA), as well as a USB and Toslink output.

In streaming mode, it can connect to your network via Ethernet or Wi-Fi. There is also a dedicated USB input for maintenance services. Digital outputs include AES/EBU (XLR), S/PDIF (RCA), and HDMI for I²S; both balanced (BAL) and unbalanced (RCA) analog outputs are available. The modular design is supported by three high-density silicone isolation feet, ensuring enhanced stability and reducing unwanted vibrations.

shielded chassis power supply, with an upper section dedicated to the tube circuit and a linear power supply. Below, three small isolated modules manage voltage stabilization and further reduce interference.

On the left, the conversion circuits are powered by an ESS9038 DAC, carefully selected by Métronome after consultation with Jean-Marie Clauzel. This DAC ensures precise, transparent sound with rich detail.

AQWO 2 also features exceptional vibration isolation, combined with a well-thought-out weight distribution for optimal stability, minimizing the impact of vibrations on sound performance.

Performance and Innovation

AQWO 2 combines SACD and streaming technologies in a single device. Its linear power supply (VULCAN eXtreme) provides stable power and drastically reduces electrical noise. With notable improvements in sound dynamics, bass detail, and an expanded soundstage, AQWO 2 achieves unparalleled performance.

To optimize the analog output, an advanced Noise-Trap filter is





- Digital Input: 1 USB Type B port (32-bit/384 kHz), S/PDIF 75 Ω RCA, AES-EBU 110 Ω XLR.
- Digital Output: Dedicated I²S HDMI, S/PDIF 75 Ω RCA, AES-EBU 110 Ω XLR.

included, along with INCREDIBLE isolation feet, which effectively absorb mechanical vibrations.

In addition to its primary functions of SACD playback and streaming, AQWO 2 also excels in managing LAN and USB connections, ensuring efficient network integration. With its premium design and exceptional sound performance, AQWO 2 establishes itself as a benchmark for discerning audiophiles.

Conclusion

Here is an in-depth presentation of the Métronome Technologie AQWO 2 CD/SACD player, primarily designed for high-end home use.

To fully enjoy AQWO 2, it is recommended to invest in a stable and high-quality power supply, whether silver or gold. For optimal sound, it is advisable to test the tubes and not overlook the wiring. As mentioned earlier, AQWO 2 meets all expectations, combining detail and dynamics. Without aiming for extreme resolution or maximum frequency response, AQWO 2 prioritizes natural musicality and a faithful expression of emotions, offering a different immersive experience.

Technical specifications

- Network Connectivity: 1 Ethernet port, integrated Wi-Fi.
- Analog Output: Unbalanced 3V RMS@0dB-47 k Ω RCA, balanced 3V RMS@0dB-600 Ω XLR.
- Optional Modules: Electronic tube output available.
- Power Supply: Toroidal transformer 3/4 with switching, integrated Schaffner filter, 10 independent stabilizers.
- Voltage: 120/240 V AC, 50/60 Hz.
- Power Consumption: 40 VA.
- Dimensions (W x H x D): 425 x 130 x 415 mm.
- Weight : 17 kg.