

Métronome DSS

Posted on July 17, 2020 [Josep Armengol](#)

Precision transport

Several Metronome products have gone through HIFI Live, always high-end digital sources (their specialty) and for the most part tested by my partner Jose Manuel Delgado (such as the latest [Metronome c-AQWO](#)), a lover of the brand. Of French origin, based near the highly technological city of Toulouse, Metronome manufactures its products entirely in France and has concentrated on the high and very high end. For the latter, in addition to some products with their brand, they also have the Kalista signature, which represents the "no more", references free of commitments and with a unique aesthetic as well.

In their more than thirty years they have had all kinds of products but they are specialized in digital sources, both disc readers, DAC converters, and recently, of course, file players either on the network or in local storage. Kalista apart, its three ranges are from highest to lowest level Classic, Aqwo and Digital Sharing. Precisely to the latter belongs the product that we tested on this occasion the Digital Sharing Streamer that we will know from now on by its initials DSS and that is one of its most affordable products (within the exclusivity).



Digital Sharing Streamer

The Metronome DSS is a pure digital source. Not only because it only reads digital files, but because it does not have an internal DAC converter: its outputs are all digital and therefore intended for one of the brand's DACs (or another), or for an amplifier that has an internal converter. In addition to the most affordable Metronome, it is also the most compact: a small cube 25 centimeters long and 7 centimeters high, which only has an LED on the front that indicates that it is running. The apparent elongated buttons on the front are only a decorative element and there is no informative screen, both a defect of the device in my opinion because it "forces" us to use a mobile phone or tablet.

It also does not have a remote control, because again it is based on use over the network with portable devices. That seems fine to me, and I use it, but if the manufacturer also offers me a "normal" infrared remote control, I give it a better score because it makes life easier for the user when they want to turn up the volume, play songs or stop music for a moment. Those actions, snapshots with a normal command (or controls on the front of the

device), are not so much without these facilities.

The front of the DSS gives, therefore, for little more. The rear instead has many connections. The IEC current input (the power, very elaborate, is internal), the digital "inputs" of the network (Ethernet with internal Wifi) and local files (two USB that do not seem to be type 3). On the other hand we have the digital outputs, and here a little surprise awaits us because it has all the usual types ... except USB. The Metronome DSS has balanced AES / EBU XLR digital output, coaxial RCA SPDIF and TosLink optics, and an I2S output on HDMI connector for its own DACs or those compatible with this connection. But strangely it does not have the most popular or recently used output, USB, whose asynchronous connection allows files of any type to be passed without limitations.



Metronome seems to think that this connection (USB) does not offer as much precision or, above all, musicality, and this is not the only device in its catalog that does not have it. In return, the "classic" outputs are highly optimized and will bring out the best in files played back and later converted to more traditional DACs. It is therefore a very interesting option for those who have a DAC with good SPDIF or AES / EBU inputs whose USB connection is not so optimal. In addition, without losing DSD compatibility since the Metronome allows to send that signal (DSD64) through the traditional outputs with the DoP protocol (which the receiving DAC must logically accept).

Inside the DSS is where we find the "savoir faire" of Metronome. Starting with the power supply, which uses its own current filter using a Talema toroidal transformer that supplies several capacitor banks. That filter (and power reserve) would be worthy of an amplifier and here it is intended to power as "clean" as possible a "simple" digital circuit. Capacitors occupy a good part of the interior space of the DSS, in various "banks" before and after regulation, and at first glance it recalls one of the

principles of Metronome in its electronics, and that is that without the best possible power, what comes next will not it could be better.

A processor handles file recognition and playback, with a small dedicated board. Here we do not find the increasingly common micro-computer board (Raspberry) more or less personalized, but a dedicated integrated player. Of British origin mConnect (it is the reference CDMCM-2121 as you can see on the board), this integrated player is used in the DSS only for its I2S digital output (it has an integrated DAC chip that is inactive here) towards the circuits already in use. the Metronome board that allows the signals to be sent to the outputs. Among other chips it uses an AKM reclocker (AK4137) with a very close precision clock, and the outputs are decoupled with precision mini-transformers.



This integrated board player is used in some other successful high-end streamer and its mConnect application, the one recommended by Metronome, will allow us to get the most out of it. Although DLNA is compatible and many other applications will also work well, yours will be how we can "see" and manage

music file libraries that we have connected to its USB inputs. With other programs we did not see that option, or they did not "see" the connected files, although we did see what arrives on the network, shared. In Roon the player is visible, for example, but not the files connected to it.

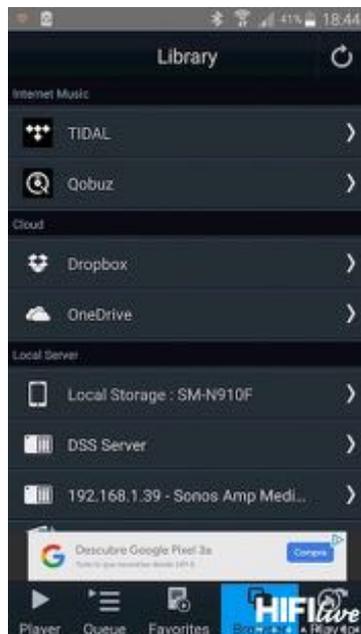
Listens

The excellent packaging of the Metronome DSS protects it upon arrival in our hands. Your connection to our system will be very simple: find a hole, not necessarily in sight (advantage of not having a screen or controls) and connect it to our network on the one hand and to the DAC or amplifier that we are going to use on the other. If we also have hard drives or USB sticks with music files, we can connect them as is to one of the two rear inputs of the device. This is an advantage because it can make us independent of computers or NAS servers depending on the size of the digital library we have, or if we select a part to have it more "at hand" in this way.

The first tests were carried out on my equipment in the salon, where I now "preside" as the digital source for the Alchemy DDP-2 that we once tested [here](#) and that finally "stayed" due to its virtues and versatility. In addition to DAC and preamp (with analog inputs), it has its own internal streamer board and is Roon Ready (earning many points). The Metronome test here was simple and straightforward: connected to the inputs of the DAC Alchemy, how much would your internal player improve?



Well, as we have already mentioned some other time, "I wish" there were no such differences between digital sources ... but there are, there are. It is true that in this case it was subtle, which speaks highly of Elac-Alchemy, and in fact they were very similar differences to the ones I recently encountered when testing Telos network filters, review [here](#). Changing on the fly or letting the music play, I almost always ended up choosing sound as "best" when the DSS was busy playing. The music, the sound scene, was better organized: a Kari Bremnes theme with a multitude of "sounds" in the three dimensions of the scene sounded more credible or realistic, since those sounds did not move and that greater stability allowed the brain to identify better the scene. The same with an orchestra, where the strings and the piano were maintained, or a chamber ensemble where each performer and each desk or score was stable. With the Alchemy playing as well as decoding, all of that sounded big, pretty, open, but those sound sources were harder to identify. It is curious that the DSS allowed you to discover something and then you "followed" it ... but you always discovered it with the other.



I have to open a brief parenthesis here and that is that the Alchemy has an I2S "HDMI" input (I put it in quotes because it is one thing to use that connector and another thing is that the protocol used is yours). But there was no luck: the Metronome and the Alchemy must use different forms of communication or internal wiring than the HDMI because the clock recognized it but nothing else ... So I connected them using coaxial cable (SPDIF) or balanced (AES / EBU) without appreciating notable differences between the two.

After the lounge, the Metronome spent a season in the basement, where it became more evident why the French have opted for "conventional" digital outputs. In this equipment, the resident DAC is a classic Meridian 568 (which is also a multichannel and previous processor) that when it was born, almost did not exist the USB connection as it says ... But its coaxial inputs thank a "good" digital source and that is precisely the DSS .



Here I compared it as a digital source with a Linn Sneaky (excellent and versatile device, unfortunately unknown by most) and the difference was somewhat less subtle than with the Alchemy but because the Linn has always had a profile, either for its analog output or digital via external DAC, warmer, softer. Compared to the Metronome DSS, also less dynamic: the DSS sounds so much more energetic that I had to verify that the level was identical, at the output of the DAC, between the two, since it seemed to sound somewhat louder. With the big Legacy boxes, and with rock music, that was welcome, and the great scene that I get in this team maintained the virtues of what was said in the other system. It even seemed that the voices understood each other better, that you get what they say in your native language or, moreover, in another: everything seems to express something better,



Conclusion

As usually happens in this hobby, we find differences that seem very subtle in direct comparison, but that in the long term can become more listening pleasure and more hours enjoying music. This is what the Metronome DSS offers: a highly optimized "base" as a pure digital player, with which to forget a good season and with which to take advantage of a good level DAC converter that we may have had long ago. Far from getting involved - and getting involved - in a technological race in search of the latest, but without forgetting its compatibility with DSD, the DSS is that small step that can be lacking in a good level team with traditional sources (plate and CD).

At the usability level, it has the point in favor of its direct USB inputs (we do not need to configure a server or computer) and, on the contrary, of not having a front screen or a dedicated remote control. Both things are supplemented as it is becoming more common with a mobile or tablet. And at the level of pure benefits, I would say that it is at a good point compared to the competition with a fair price in the midst of its (I would say) two biggest rivals, the Lumin U1 Mini and U1 "just plain", which precisely also matters Ars Antiqua Audio. The differences between them are, as I said before, sometimes subtle, but let's not forget that in the nuances is precisely the art of music.

Highlights

- + Digital «streamer» source perfect for traditional DACs
- + Ease of use with the mConnect application
- + Direct internet access and files stored on USB
- Without remote control, direct controls or screen
- No USB output for DACs that have it

Price: 3,490 euros

DATA SHEET

DLNA compatible digital network player. Supported formats: PCM 44'1 up to 384 kHz and DSD64 (DoP), from DSD, PCM, FLAC, WAV. Roon ready, Spotify Connect, AirPlay, DLNA / UpNP. Inputs: RJ45 Ethernet, 2x USB local storage. Digital outputs: Toslink, Coaxial (RCA), AES / EBU (XLR) and I2S (HDMI) optics. All PCM 44'1 up to 384 kHz and DSD64 (via DoP). Power supply: internal, toroidal transformer with filtering by multiple capacitors and several independent regulation lines. Dimensions (width x depth x height) 250 x 250 x 70 mm. Weight: 4.8 kg. Colors: black or silver.

(translated by Google Translate)