

Review of Metronome' Le Player 4+, by Srajan Ebaen, 09/2022 on :



AUDIO REVIEWS



LE PLAYER 4+

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



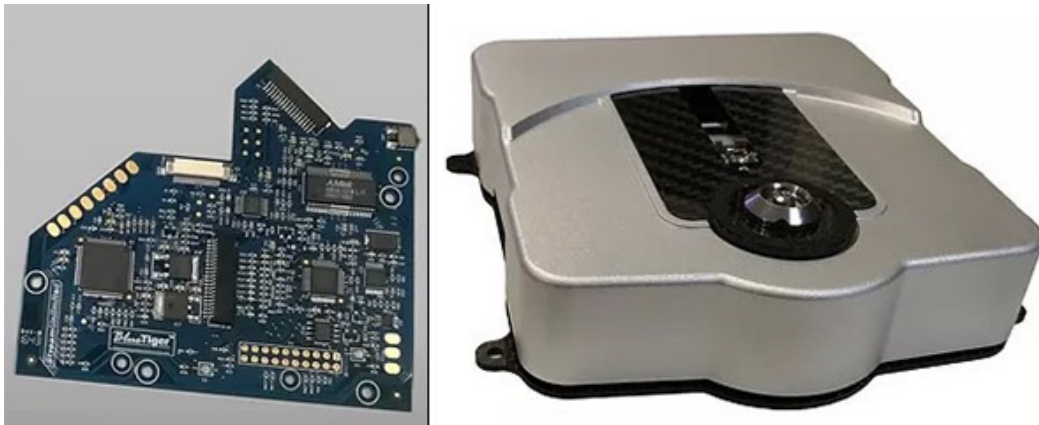
FRANCE



Das Boot.

That takes no German to translate. Submarine. Incoming. Likewise for Le Player 4+. It'll be French of course, at minimum a digital transport in already its 4th incarnation. The '+' should signify additional go-faster features. It does. Nonplussed it's a purist €7.7K CD transport based on the metallic Pro8 top loader from Austria's Stream Unlimited modified by Métronome. Preferred connection to the matching separate Le DAC 2 is I2S via HDMI.

The '+' suffix builds the €7K standalone converter's ESS engine and analog RCA/XLR outputs into the transport. USB adds PCfi for political correctness and inclusiveness. Hello all-in-one credo of the musketeers. Still optional is a €1.8K streaming board for the 4th musketeer. It's always part of Le Mét's revised Classica range; how one enters their world. As an upscale brand, this entry is another firm's exit. Run with the big dogs, don't bring a dinky wallet. Of course Métronome's luxury Kalista division still goes to a whole different level. In French car terms, that's Bugatti against which the Classica range might play Peugeot 508 model. For Gallic charm, Le Player 4's touch-sensitive controls have moved from the earlier gen's display to a navbar fronting the disc loading bay. It's a very clean classy look; and très bleu.



With a Sabre 9026 onboard, there's 32/384 resolution over USB and 192kHz over S/PDIF, AES/EBU and Toslink); an optional 75Ω S/PDIF output to bypass the '+' and convert back to pure transport duties; 2.5Vrms RCA and XLR analog outputs; a triple-tranny linear supply with Schaffner filters; dimensions of 45×43.5×11.4cm DxHxW; and weight of 12kg. Adjustable Delrin footers and Métronome's own remote wand are included. The optional streaming module integrates Qobuz, Tidal and Spotify and adds RJ45 and USB A. Finish options are black or silver.

Before you dis(miss) CD as a passé music carrier that's spun only by an endangered species of antediluvian legacy user, according to this John Darko [poll](#), half of his YouTube viewers still do the digital disc. I also concur with his finding that pound for pound, CD sounds better than streaming. Compare a streamer to an equally priced CD player and hear the truth of that claim. CD also spin offline without Big Brother's data mining; rely on no Internet connection; and don't disappear from your library should an artist pull their catalogue from a cloud server.

This short film on the subject in fact presents 15 reasons why the 40-year old CD format remains relevant. That's nine more than the six secrets to better sex. Obviously (cough!) attending Spin Academy 101 with CD is better than sex!

https://6moons.com/audioreview_articles/metronome-le-player-4plus/

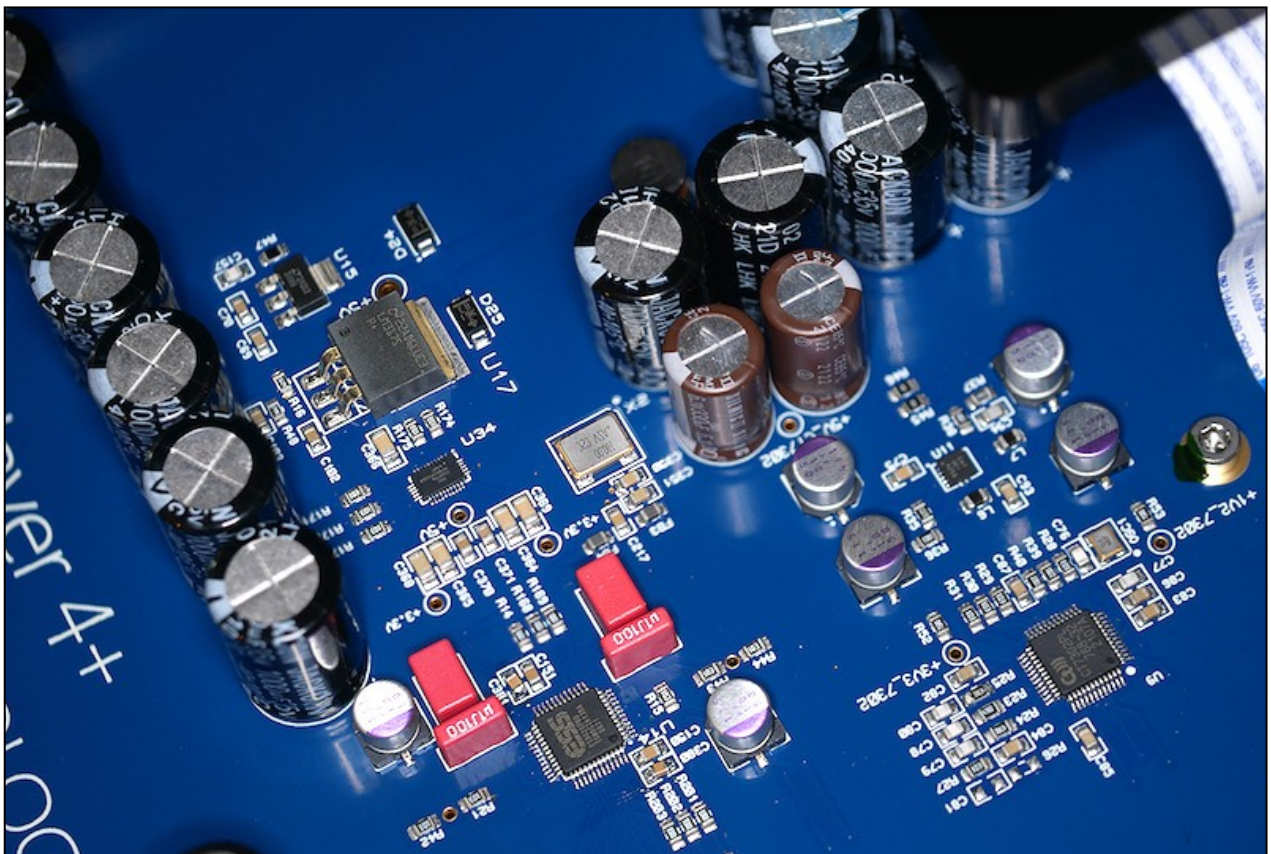
Getting serious again, Le Player 4+ is a costly CDP without SACD. For many that makes it an anachronism. But for enough people—it's why this is far from Métronome's first polycarbonate rodeo—a premium CD player remains *the* digital source to beat. This review then is specifically for their sort who would also consider a \$9K T+A MP 2000R MkII or \$9.6K MBL Cadenza C31, both from Germany.



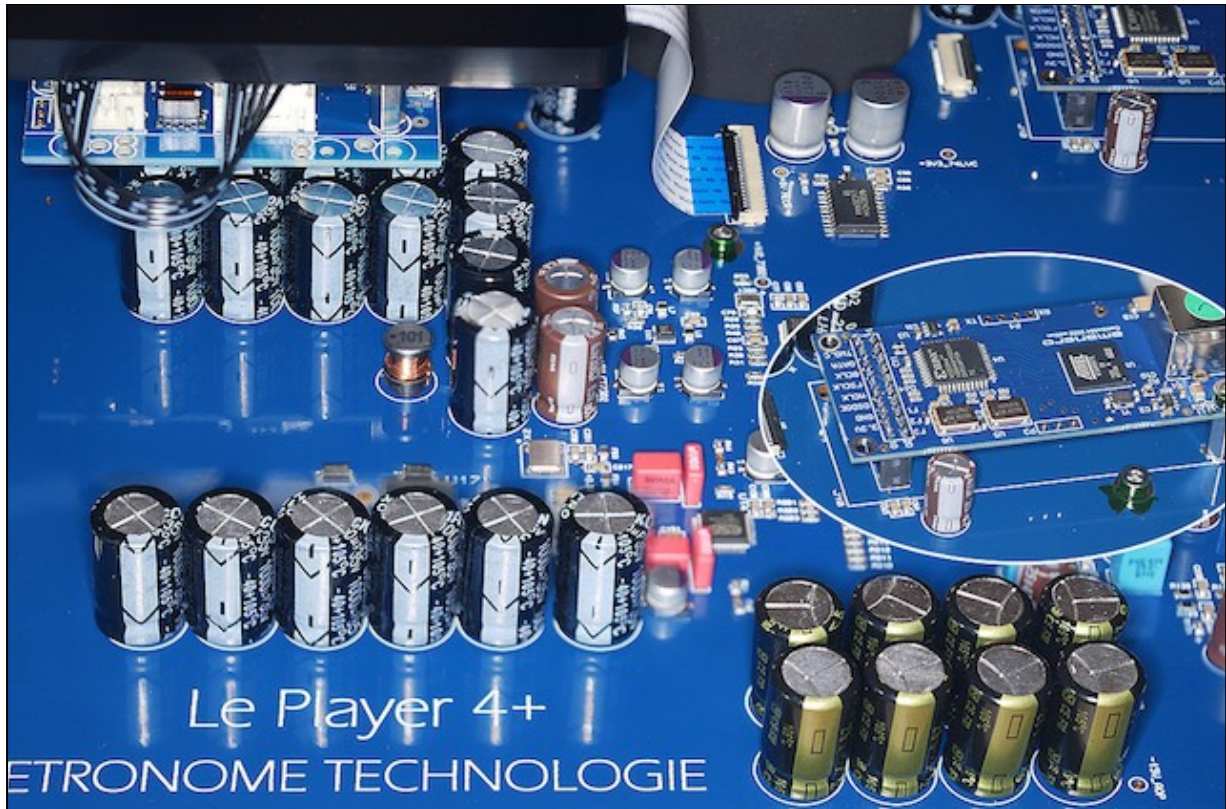
Removing the top cover reveals these innards and shiny plexi CD tray carefully suspended.



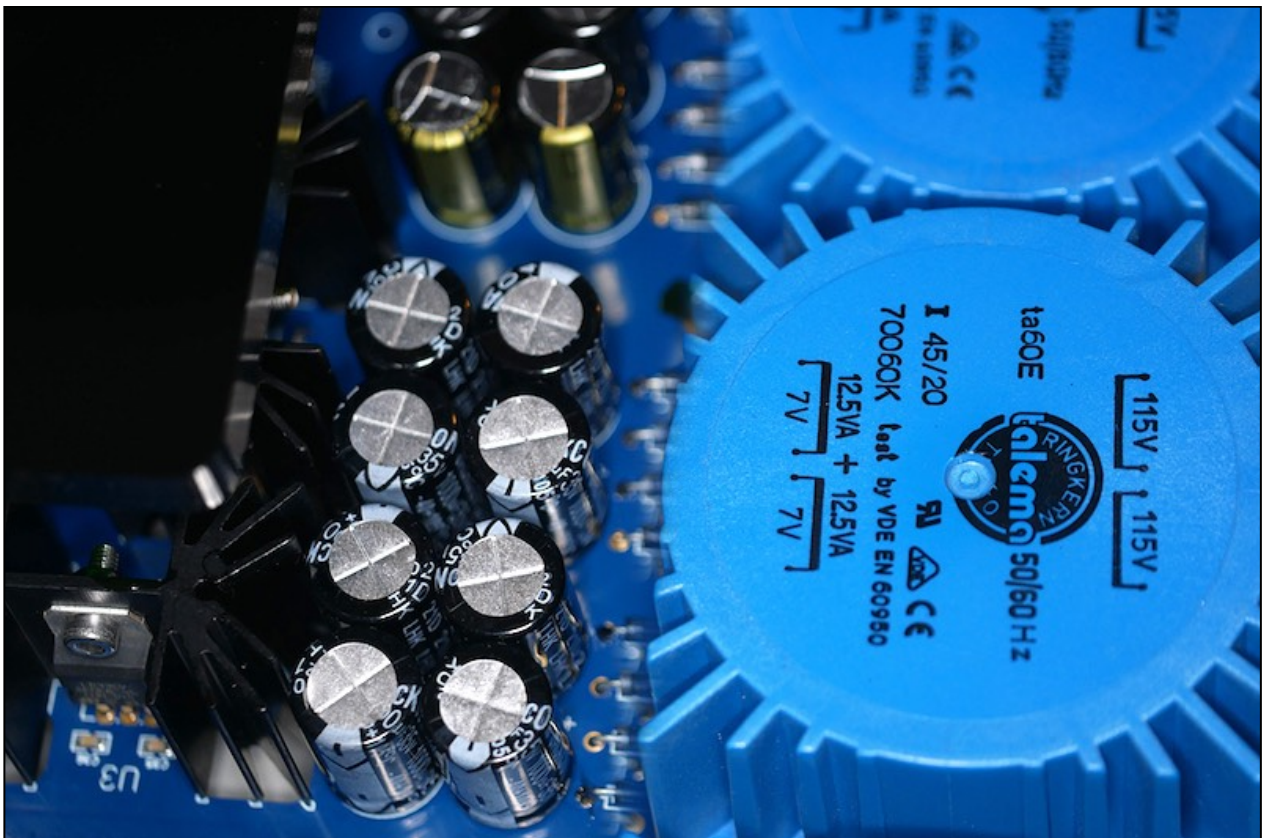
Here we see the converter chip and OXCO clock.



Next we ogle some of the many capacitors on this board ; and an overlay of piggy-backing USB module.



Here's one of three such Talema transformers to segregate different circuits.



Le derrière sans optional streamer module shows how the latter's absence leaves no unsightly vacant slot...



... whilst the Delrin cones sport magnetized inserts to gently pointify the already installed flat-footed cylinders.



Next comes a look at the transport's optical head and Metronome's IR wand.



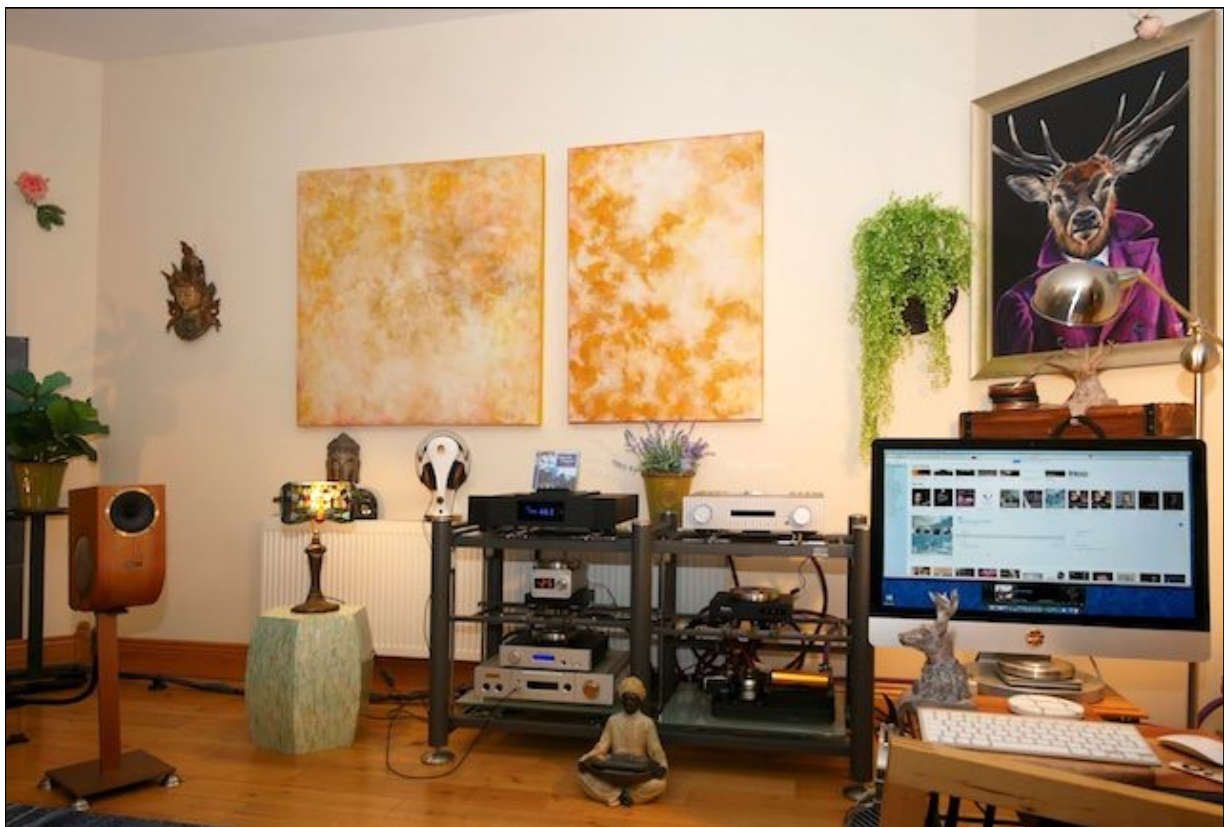
Finally a display view with 24/96 kHz signal over AES/EBU.



Power it up and the black screen soon shows *Métronome le son vrai*—the true sound not first-born son—then the model name with serial #, then the last-used input. If that was CD, it shows total time and track number. Press 'play' and see *track 1 0.00*. A few seconds pass before *0.00* turns *0.01*. Rather than selectable time modes, this display can only show track time elapsed plus the progression bar. Say the display shows 3:30 for elapsed track time but the progress bar is only 1/4th across. It takes no math to know at a glance that this track will be ~14 minutes long. It's not precise but close enough. If the remote doesn't respond, it's because you've accidentally pressed the *CD/amp* button. Press it again and voilà. The central location of this button makes it quite error-prone. That's poor design despite the CD/amp mini LED on the wand's top actually telling you in green or red. Lovely again is that repeat 1/all won't just bring up a tiny icon you can't see from the seat. Instead it shows *repeat disc*, *repeat 1* and *normal play* in big bold letters before adding the usual tiny icon in the upper right corner. Forget about niceties such as random play, scan, A-B repeat and full program which my Denafrips transport based on the Philips CDM4/19 top loader all packs on its remote. If the Pro8 has that functionality, Métronome opted to bypass it. Say you listen to track 3 then press the direct-access 9 button. The display will immediately show *9/15*—the second number for total tracks—then hang for several seconds while the laser head moves to the correct position. This Austrian sled isn't the fastest gun in the West.



Should you go USB direct with a software upsampler, you won't get sound if that upsampler is set to max. It correctly sees this Amanero USB transceiver as 768kHz capable and sets itself accordingly. So change your max rate to 384kHz and Le Player will respond. That seems a wrinkle which could still get ironed out with a firmware refresh. Again lovely is that in menu mode the \pm volume buttons become adjustable brightness gain. We can very gradually tweak the backlighting from very dim to very bright. An absentee feature again is variable gain on the analog outputs. Given that the optional streamer module transforms this machine into a complete source, some prospective buyers could wish to see an elite gain controller like a Muses 72320 chip baked in; or two for true dual differential. After all, the remote already includes the requisite controls.



Le son vrai. On that score, our French deck declared close allegiance with our upstairs Denafrips Terminator + so minor divergence from the downstairs Sonnet Pasithea. That throws shade at Arnie on micro resolution, top-end energy and perceived speed. Speed is the ability to render truly spiky transients wherever the material demands. T+ plays up density and minor warmth instead. In general parlance that puts it into the 'organic' drawer.

That's also where Le Player 4+ set up shop. In this league, I hear DAC differences as rather mild. Today certainly didn't trigger me into corrective *après*. That's when after changing one thing, we feel the instant need to change others to reset our personal balance. Otherwise we notice the shift right after the hardware shuffle. We rapidly settle in, soon think no more of it. That's because the effect won't linger with any aftertaste. That's my toed line. Nobody knows where that line of virgin-snow neutrality runs. If hardware swaps have us equanimous, I call them toeing the line. There's not enough deviation or deviant behavior to show up strong voicing like inebriation. Whatever voicing is in place is artful enough to leave no permanent burnt rubber mark, no look-at-them donuts on the blacktop. It's down to mild shadings. Though we may declare allegiance on an instinctual level, we can't earnestly call one more correct than the other without first exaggerating the offset. That also was the case for Le Player.

Perhaps because it runs on ESS not AKM silicon; perhaps because it's the company's entry-level machine to reserve stronger flavors for further up the line; I didn't hear as distinctive a psych profile as I remember from previous gigs at Le Mét. To accommodate lazy swaps from the seat, I set up a passive-magnetic autoformer volume control between converters. Both got the same S/PDIF signal through my Singxer SU-6 super-cap powered USB bridge. It's how I tracked that ultimately, our Dutch DAC digs still deeper into ambient recovery, depth and specificity cues. It's how I mapped that the French DAC was slightly warmer as though the lower mid/upper bass zone held a tad more weight. But again, after exhausting my input switcheroo, I simply settled into Le Player as is and soon felt right at home.

As a shopper by proxy, I weigh looks, build quality and functionality not just sound. With competitive digital, it's often functionality and looks which trump sound as the ultimate decider. For looks, I really fête Métronome's decision to put the main capacitive-touch controls on the top. It looks super sorted and elegant and avoids fatty finger prints on a touch display. I found the CD player functionality a bit sparse but really loved the big legible display. I found the remote features adequate but wished that hitting the *menu* button would first confirm by also showing 'menu' in the display; and that the *CD/amp* assignation button were moved to the wand's very top to not get accidentally hit. In my experience Métronome build quality has always been impeccable, big and solid. Nothing on that score suggested any changes.