



Denmark :

Metrum Octave MkII

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Non Oversampling DAC ? This cannot be ignored ...

The DAC market is large and confusing and from this quarter comes Metrum with their NOS DAC.

What distinguishes Dutch company Metrum from others is the use of NOS, Non-oversampling, with a chip solution that does not automatically upsample the audio signal but instead simply converts the signal as it is, which Metrum believe is a sonically better solution.



A NOS DAC using no Up or Oversampling therefore, needs no filtration of any kind afterwards, as the total absence of any signal manipulation guarantees in theory, that one gets a more accurate and bit-perfect result than you normally do - with an oversampling DAC.

However Metrum do not use normal Audio chips with their solution but use what is referred to as industrial data D/A chips.

The packaging includes a dull brown cardboard box but on the inside it is lined with white foam for extra protection - it's a really nice gesture from the manufacturer, so that it provides extra safe protection for the DAC. Therein, a small bag includes a USB cable and driver, however if desirable you can download the driver online - as it is an M2 Tech driver and design that is used.

As with the larger Hex model, the USB converter is bolted on the inside of the unit. Unfortunately being such a small unit we did not open the casing for fear of damaging the screws. However, there are pictures online that immediately show it is a thoughtful design. The Power supply is now located inside the housing whereas with the MK I version a separate box was used.

To the sound ...

There are several things that shine through. First of all, it is very quiet with a very low noise floor, not experienced with even the most expensive turntable setups. Had it been an amplifier, the sound might aptly be described as "playing with abundant power." The dynamics feel only limited by the source material and the presentation appears to sound neutral and very well-resolved. Acoustic space is large without being exaggerated but there is still precision placement of the musicians in the soundstage. The detailing is great throughout and especially in the bass – you can be surprised with its detail and the nuances that are portrayed.



The American Indie rock band My Morning Jacket's number "Wordless Chorus" is amazingly tranquil in presentation and the voicing here is rendered beautifully with high-resolution and detail, the bass is energetic and massive but still precise and there is still room in between for the tone of other instruments, while treble sounds are subtle and airy and in all cases clear to hear.

Papa Bue's Viking Jazz Band features Bjarne Liller and the classic number "Almost a beer up" is also resolved clearly and distinctly, the voice is marked by drink and smoke but heard with faithful interest in recording terms. The soundstage is slightly retracted with good depth and the instruments are carved onto the soundscape and come through clearly - banjo blasting.

The bass is heard clearly and well nuanced, which otherwise can be problematic when it is mixed a bit too low compared to the other instruments - if you have to be a little cantankerous. Chords are also exceptionally clear.

Buena Vista's Social Club "Candela" is a light and airy number, there is plenty of space and air around the voice, while the rhythm unabashedly continues driving the music along. All the little details and instrumental impact comes through fine, while the midrange gets to show what it can do.



Apocalyptica's "Worlds Collide" shows fine layering of Cellos are on track, everything comes through clean and clear with high-resolution, the bottom end is very solid without bluster.

Lumsk's "Trolltind", makes a loud impact, with good transients, the beautiful singing voice appears natural with body (she was a big woman at the time) and the dynamics of the bass guitar is very impressive. Bass drums are not that hard but it is the momentum they provide. Brass instruments are vibrant and detailed, as is the guitar. It is one of the best renditions of this number I've heard. The guitar is raunchy and has bite, as it should, without ever being annoying to the ears.

Michael Jackson's "Beat it" has a lower midrange that is rock hard and right on the beat, as it should be. Bass and guitar rhythms swing perfectly and well timed and everything else on the track is well produced and right on the beat. The number is, however, particularly in tone, still reproduced with calm and energy.

Prokofiev's "Dance of the Knights" has a lot of nice "blown instruments" for fans, they come through with thick solid bottom ends, trumpets sound full and dynamic with resolution rarely heard. Soundstage is fairly broad, with a good but precise depth.



"Hanuman" by Rodrigo y Gabriela, swings with the guitar, the resolution is high, timing perfect all the way, detailed with an airiness throughout the spectrum and plenty of recorded space.

Rammstein's "Keine Lust" is reproduced well, despite an inferno of instruments, with Till Lindeman's voice loud and clear in every part - avoiding being mixed up with the rest. It is a very impressive wall of sound one is exposed to - without it becoming a mudslide.

Moving on, it's a very, almost incredibly well-resolved driving reproduction from Dave Brubeck's "Take Five". A stunning level of nuance in the double bass with saxophone flowing out easily and well-resolved in a natural fashion - the music is completely freed from the speakers.

Conclusion

Octave is not just good all around, it is really good. We do not offer prizes or price trophies, but if we did, it would be Metrum Octave MKII for Price and the year's Best Buy.

Price: 6995 - USB module to 995

Specifications

Type of dac: Non oversampling dac

Power: 15 VA internal power supply

Inputs: 1x optical, 1x coaxial, 1x USB (optional)

Outputs: 2x gold RCA connectors

Max output voltage: 2 V RMS max.

Slewing rate: 35 Volt / μ S

Frequency range: 1Hz 0dB until half sampling rate -3dB.

Distortion: <0.04% THD

Noise: -120 dB / dB -125 16 bits / 24 bits.

Output impedance: 85 Ohms

Sampling frequency: Optical: 44 to 96 kHz Coaxial: 44 to 192K. USB (optional) 44 to 192 kHz.

Dimensions: WxHxD 190 x 60 x 245 mm

Weight: 1900 grams including USB module