

# SUONO

## OH MAMMA MIA! È ARRIVATO IL MICROLUSSO PER DAVVERO! Triangle Borea BR08

### In prova

#### -STADI PHONO-

Faber's Power GM\_phono v.3.0

Gold Note PH-5

EMT Pro EMT 128 micro tube precision

Moon 110LP V2

#### - DAC -

SW1X Audio Design DAC II

#### - AMPLI INTEGRATI -

Accuphase E-280

Grandinote Shinai

#### - DIFFUSORI -

Devore Fidelity Orangutan 0/93

Penaudio Serenade Signature



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VOLUME DIECI  
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**QUESTE (S)CONOSCIUTE**



*Of course the world is strange, the eternal technological competition always bra never ending, we are completely enveloped (not all) by a sort of electric fogThe Mistwhich spreads everywhere, never being able to predict what monstrosity remains hidden there and where the poor human being, perhaps out of necessity indulged by his own kind, finds himself damned entangled; then, if we add to this between the lines... everyone does it so I do it too, a sort of unfortunate performance anxiety also develops and it is with this last stroke of grace that I finally find you again- catapulted you from horror to science fiction of clear nature*

*"Matrixian".  
In the case of DACs what matters is how much you are able to sample, to upscale, to bitrate and even to download: an extreme race in search of the maximum but definition by which 4k is few, better 20k or 16 bit? We're not kidding, mejo 2000!*  
Then, the classic English of the moment appears with an old-time aplomb, because SW1X in this case is not the postcode of London (although in reality it really is!) but it just so happens to be the name of the company than of zerooversampling and the absence of digital filters made their own flag and, voilà, here is the SW1X Audio Design DAC II...

I must say that personally I have always considered myself more devoted to analogue, without absolutely making it a single form of listening: I honestly think that I am simply more satisfied by the healthy listening of an excellent turntable compared to a good CD player, even recognizing to the latter all the goals and surprising improvements of the last twenty-five years. A lot of water has flowed under the bridge and if at the time the blame was placed on the immaturity of the new form of musical reproduction, now that the apex of its potential has been reached, it is senseless to continue to mislead enthusiasts by focusing on mere questions of technology and , if the production

of CD players has been slowed down by the companies most geared towards the consumer, the more no-compromise ones continue to keep their catalogue, sometimes focusing on theoretical performances determined by sampling with even little sense frequencies. We haven't fully gotten the real out yet potential of the canonical 16 bit e do we necessarily want to arrive who knows where on the market? Illogical, Mr. Spock of would comment.*Star Trek*and sometimes pseudo-reality blends perfectly with science fiction. A bit like passing wines on the verge of decent for wood with the aim of covering up defects that are easily found even by the least

## CONVERTER

— ON THE FIELD

# SW1X Audio Design DAC II

**Price:!" 4,990.00**

**Dimensions:**35 x 14 x 41cm (wxxd)

**Weight:**9.6 Kg

**Distributor:**New Perfect Audio

[www.perfectaudiosrl.it](http://www.perfectaudiosrl.it)

**Conversion system:**2 x PCM56, R2R dacs**Oversampling:** pure zero oversampling moded**digital inputs:**SPDIF, AES-EBU**Analog Outputs:** RCA (optional XLR)**Note:**Tube output stage SET in zero feedback class. Tube rectification, linear power supply, voltage regulation, discrete component shunt. Basic version + USB (7,790 euros), SPX (6,690), SPX + USB (10,390), balanced (12,290)



experts... and I speak for the experience I have gained in my main occupation!

And we come to SW1X Audio Design which, just spending some time on the company website, proceeds straight on its way regardless of these "background noises": what is striking about the Essex factory is that it already transmits from the first fleeting readings a simple and effective concept, or rather that starting from the importance of a certain given component in a certain specific point of the circuit, the benefits brought they will be promoters of qualitative improvement. This way of the-work in continuous refinement (always a similarity with making wine...) gives a sort of pleasant sensation that revolves around something lost or that entering with a decisive step into a modus of sharing one's point of view and making it usable with anyone who still has time and the desire to explore topics that in the past, recent but at the same time distant, it was very legitimate to deal with in almost all hi-fi enjoyment of our cities. Fine discussions that bring to mind diatribes about the capacitor or fervent discussions about the influence of silver wiring compared to copper or, perhaps, if a very rare carbon block shelf was better for that device than air suspension... Good times, at least for me and some old friends of mine, perhaps times gone by even if spending time on the site manufacturer's website at the "navi-

gante" maybe they will surface certain memories come to mind. Be that as it may, for every product developed by Dr. Slawa Roschkow, "one man band" of the brand, there are explanations on why and about but; without shadow fascinating doubt then deciding to go against the tide in a sector where the highest resolution frequency is chased, a path that has had and still has illustrious names, starting from that Kimura San of 47Labs that made school on no-oversampling to continue to Kondo, Audionote or Reimyo, to move on to the latest creations of the Dutch Metrum Acoustics. Evidently, someone in recent times must have realized that not oversampling (and but perhaps ban certain filters) has the rare gift of bringing the true color of the musical reality of the songs we are going to listen to! A much more marked form of emotional participation and, on the other hand, ham with a little fat is better, it's more balanced and tasty. This in summary is the incipit of the story, and the seasoning in this case is thermionic. More generally, the basic concept of Roschkow is to offer various types of devices and in fact in the catalog of the house there are DACs, phono preamplifiers and line with integrated phono, which can in turn be upgraded to more performing versions. manti (step 2,3 but also 4,5 or X) and even more refined, raising the performance and implementation bar of the part

technological. They are then in the catalogue monophonic amplifiers configured in single ended triode that make use of the queen tube, i.e the 300B, but also of the rare 45s DHT with direct heating, zero feedback and rigorously in class A. For all electronics, the rule of using valves together, if necessary, with vintage but quality transistors, with noble metals such as gold or palladium and, to further exaggerate, we resort to the use of state-of-the-art interstage transformers as required by the school of the most rigorous and esoteric made in Japan. Also for everything concerning the quality of the passive components ed

active, we are in the presence of such a high level of quality and research that we rarely happen to see, except in some extreme creations. In continuing the list of various products that SW1X offers, they cannot be overlooked ski the integrated amplifiers, rigorously with direct heating in triode mode, various cables, some additional modules (see phono step-up but also step attenuator) rigorously completely handmade and I hear that sooner or later there should also be a digital source... more ! The constant is a careful search for the sound quality of every smallest detail, whether it is one

**The converters configured in dual mono are 2 Texas Instrument 16-bit PCM56Ps while the output stage is based on a pair of E182CCs and Russian counterparts, with manually made SW1X interstage transformers. In the case of the SPX version used by us, the power supply uses a 5Y3 vacuum tube to rectify the current and everything is mounted on double-sided glass-nite circuits placed on spacers: the two precious foil decoupling capacitors are clearly visible of copper and oil produced by Audio Note and the assembly appears accurate, with excellent quality !laying produced internally (Genesis series cables in single strand or Litz).**



simple resistance or maybe a small diode, attention that speaks volumes about the care placed perhaps in those passive or active components that are the fulcrum for the result that Roschkow has pre- set to achieve. If I think back to the small ending of English Acoustics, the C21 (ITS- Not. 568) the memory of the emerges immoderate research into detail which is pleasantly pleasing to the eye but is the result of the care also placed in the clear research of the component which, skilfully inserted in a given point of the circuit, will allow to make the famous difference. We are always in the presence of a sort of haute couture and the costs are affected, although far from being as expensive as certain modern and fascinating creations. tions made for high finance. And let's get to the DAC II object of this test: as soon as it is taken out of the simple cardboard packaging, the first thing that catches the eye is the sum of dozens of tests

performed in person by Dr. Roschkow and attachments to the accompanying paper. The unit, based on R2R conversion, represents for SW1X Audio Design the second step in performance as regards converters. Aesthetically, both in terms of width and depth of the chassis, it is very reminiscent of the aesthetic canons of the Audio Note UK: on the front in thick aluminum, in addition to the logo, there is a status LED and no power switch (which we will find on the back). Also for reasons of design affinity (it is specifically studied ta on Kimura's DAC of the same name San with zero-oversampling at 16 bit) the test was carried out using mainly the mechanics of reading the 47Labs, a private unit drawer but with visible mechanism equipped with magnetic clamp. On the sidelines I also used an Esoteric player with drawer action VRDS Neo version, the SW1X DAC II was inserted

and run in for a couple of months in my usual system, composed as well as by the aforementioned mechanics 47Labs, from an amplification full tubes three frames made in France ce (in PP triode configuration) and the new entry represented by the Audiomaster21 loudspeakers, a new version of the LS5/9 re-edited in all respects to the original. The always green and historical Goldmund Digital Reference 75 Ohm was used as coaxial digital interconnect cable, a cable that I have practically always carried with me and which has held up having never lost the comparison or almost with all those transited over the years ( clearly with some small exceptions!), while for the rest of the wiring JPS labs and Tiglon cables were used, all placed and decoupled on several junctures and with various methodologies in a specific well-kept environment both acoustically and energetically.

The DAC II placed on a Bright Star multi-material base Audio proved itself right away very quiet and I decide to leave with *Right Time*, the compact by the Pisan pianist Federico Frassi on the EMME Records label: the quintet recorded in Viareggio (House of Glass) immediately presents an excellent scansion of the sound levels, the sound of the piano born from the leader is repropoused since immediately with a certain materiality and the size of the instrument is respected. As far as the harmonic decays are natural, the double bass played by Anelli is slightly set back and not particularly visceral in impact but lean and fluid without audible holes and the cavates and the sporadic clicks of the nail are well perceived, without neglecting the breath of the musician himself, enhancing the degree of resolution of the DAC II. In the song *Serenity Waltz*, score written by Frassi, the sound of the Rhodes is intelligible

**On the back there is the main switch, located on the VDE tank; always on the back the three input connections available with the XLR 110 Ohm version, the coaxial one and the optical one; the USB is missing which is optional. The connection park is completed by a ground socket and RCA outputs (the balanced ones are optional) made in a no-compromise manner using output transformers. Given the low consumption and the life of thousands of hours of the tubes, as well as the very high quality of the famous Black Gate capacitors and some vintage transistors with noble metals, the suggestion is to keep the ignition in continuous mode, to allow you to enjoy always of the highest quality.**



A52



le and perfectly integrated with the trumpet of La Mancusa which, without overdoing it, remains perfectly focused in the center stage, just in the slight distance, while the sound of Battaglia's cymbals appears pleasant and bright. Also in this piece, as in the previous one, Anelli's double bass solo is enjoyable, with a healthy timbre as well as proving to be almost palpable.

In the hope of being able to maintain the high level of pleasantness found in the performance of the Tuscan jazz musicians, I dive into a small Grp Records classic or rather *I remember Clifford* (GRP 1992), a tribute to the amazing trumpeter Arturo Sandoval assisted by excellent musicians at the service of a splendid full digital recording. The opening of *Joy Springs* performed on the piano by Kirkland fills the scene with a bright and natural timbre: the drums are rhythmically played on the left between the sound of the snare and Kenny Washington's laugh, the horn section is central while the sax solo develops clearly in a slight depth tenor by Ed Calle, wet, carnal and swinging, while in the final stage of the piece tick decided the open and nuanced sound of Sandoval's trumpet, a true master gifted with refined typical mood of the 50s school. With this compact it is easy to evaluate the scenic reconstruction of the sound image, you can enjoy excellent well-dilated stereophony beyond the confines of speakers and a scene with good depth not particularly accentuated but with a credible height. The low portion of the frequencies is often surprising for its modulation and speed: a certain form of reality is perceived, without it fireworks, without surprise dere but unleashing an excellent timbre imbued with many small ones

minute details that are not easy to identify at first glance; then, with the increase of familiarity with the SW1X DAC II, one can intuit further subtleties that allow overall to bring out a picture that stands up to the best creations of the competition. To have a clearer idea of the scene reconstruction and spatiality qualities, parameters very dear to me, I decided to listen again with great pleasure *The 40th Anniversary Tour of the UK* (Telarc) a 1999 compact with an excellent line-up that sees the peak of Dave Brubeck's career, accompanied by historic musicians who have often revolved around the protagonist Bobby Militello virtuoso of alto sax and a rhythm section that runs on straight tracks like a train in motion composed by Dankworth & Jones, respectively on double bass and drums. In *Oh You Can Run* the opening syncopation played between the piano and the rhythm section serves as a forerunner to Militello's superb solo: the alto sax appears centrally advanced with respect to the piano, placed on the left, and the timbre is rough and rightly pointed: one could almost compare in a male voice scratchy and extensive... Stay for- the phrasing is perfectly understandable while the rhythm section, set back to the right, trots with ease up to the point that the bass separates and begins one's own and right from the start ap- seems dynamic well sized- to physically and pleasantly extended. In conclusion, the brilliant musician that was Brubeck, with his usual infinite pleasant class, lavishes himself on a splendid essay of pure improvisation: the instrument appears large,

very complete and perfectly in focus, while in the distance, to conclude the piece, the applause of the audience appears very real. The stage recreated by the SW1X appears, pass me the term that I rarely like to use and abuse, superlative!

Turning to classical and symphonic music (Rachmaninoff, adagio dalla *Symphony No. 2 in E minor op27* with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra conducted by Zinman) the strings are the masters with a wide but not exaggerated scene: no form of gigantism is manifested! The soaring of the whole orchestra in unison in the center movement is beautiful: you notice a great detail and precision even compared to the last rows of musicians, all to is perfectly understandable thanks to an excellent scanning of the sound planes, a feature also found when listening to the *Allegretto from Symphony in D minor* by Franck by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra conducted by the great López Cobos. In the opening, the oboe rises from the back of the room until it takes full control of the beginning of the score: it is a delicate movement but rich in multiple nuances that form the consolidated basis for the emergence of the double basses and a horn part French, while the arches are well present but behind, as if they didn't want not to participate actively but it's only one pretend, in fact here they are then advance with decision! The result is convincing as well as fascinating for display refinement. Also from the Telarc catalog step a *Adagio for Strings* (Barber with the direction of Kunzel and the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra): also in this case the strings form the background for the part played by the row of double basses yes as the scene develops with

a considerable depth and a fair width; the stamp of the latter appear to have that right roughness typical of the bowed sound. It is a powerful sound overall, even if softness prevails in this score: we appreciate a sort of right amount of homogeneity of the frequencies, without any of them taking over in a particular way in a mix with the right balance. The DAC does justice to what is heard, giving light and the right amount of savoir-faire in delivering certain sonorities where and when required. As anticipated, I then continued the test of the converter produced by SW1X Audio Design using the mechanics of the Esoteric, less extreme and perhaps in some ways more traditionalist than the 47Labs. Again, i results were noteworthy: in this configuration the sound it leans more on the neutrality of the timbre than on nuances that shift the "heat point" of the performance. With this I absolutely do not want to say that the sound is light and less enjoyable or musical, on the contrary: it is a different but excellent form of reproduction...

Summing up, what can be added is that we are dealing with a component so well made that listening to it is a bit like being transported to the laboratory of a luthier; we add that the performances offered are at times disconcerting for expressive naturalness, timbre and respect for what is recorded on the disc. When you're immersed in your listening, you look at the clock and you can't understand how the hours of music went by so quickly, the answer is simple in my opinion: the pleasantness and the sonic amalgamation is such that you remain enchanted and time runs smoothly!