

Something different.....

Mytek Digital has (just as Benchmark Media) gained a firm position in the world of professional audio equipment. The AD as well as the DA Mytek converters are highly regarded for their neutrality and reliability.

Many music production companies, such as Sony, prefer Mytek Digital to any other make. So Sony contacted Mytek Digital in 2005 for the development of a DSD Master recorder. Of course, Mytek Digital took up the challenge to develop a DA converter with the capability of handling DoP, i.e. DSD over PCM. Mytek does this particularly well, because the 192DSD can now - in addition to the DSD64 standard - process the more sophisticated DSD128 standard even better.

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Description and features

De Mytek Stereo 192DSD is built in Poland and comes in a compact and sturdy cabinet (21,6 x 21,6 x 4,36 cm). The sample I tested is a silver one, but two other versions are available with a black front panel. They are different where the inputs for various applications are concerned, and this clearly shows their professional use.

The front is conveniently arranged and has a clear display. It only takes a little while to get used to the various controls and turning switch, but the instructions for use are clear and a block diagram is provided. On the rear every square centimeter is taken up: in addition to S-PDIF cinch, there is a balanced XLR AES/EBU input, two USB inputs (1.1. and 2.0 resp.), a Firewire 400 connection (especially for updating purposes), a world clock

input/output for synchronization purposes, an optical TOS-link input and - last but not least - an analogue input, only treated as analogue. The outputs are two asymmetrical cinch connectors and two XLR connectors for balanced use. A 6,3 mm headphone output is provided on the front panel.

The inside of the cabinet is pretty well packed. We noticed that the power supply has a mains filter as well as a robust toroidal transformer. Most manufacturers, especially in the professional realm, opt for a SMPS i.e. a switching PSU, because this saves them the need to include various transformers for different currents around the world. Mytek Digital have chosen for a switching PSU, so you are warned.

The inputs and related electronics are housed in a sizable FPGA. The clock regeneration is also custom-made. For DA conversion the ESS Sabre 9018 chip - 'the new kid in town' - is used with 4 DA converters parallel per channel to reach an optimum signal-to-noise ratio. The analogue buffer stage is an anonymous one (the type number having been erased), but we could determine that it is a condenser-free output. The headphone amplifier is not a standard one, but a fully dedicated one.

Setting up

After reading the detailed instruction manual, I first installed the necessary drivers, for USB 2.0 (for MAC too) as well as for DoP use. Everything went fine and the drivers are of excellent quality and in an XP-Pro setting, too. In making the connections, there is first of all the choice of outputs to be used. In my own setup I can use the balanced as well as the unbalanced outputs. It did take some effort to adjust the outputs for a usable hifi output level, and then measurements are a must! Of course, you can use the excellent volume control for adjustments, but my first choice was to try and bypass the volume control. Rudo Meijer of AudioSense had already told me that the test sample had sufficiently been 'burned in', but the readers of HVT and other hifi publications know my sound mistrust where this damned 'burning in' is concerned: 'The preamp only fully blossomed musically after having been burned in for 2 weeks', and more of that crap.



An interesting feature is the possibility to select a low-pass filter to eliminate any unwanted signals from about 50 kHz upwards. Such signals are always present when recording DSD music, and other manufacturers should follow this commendable Mytek example.

There are filtering possibilities for PCM as well. Mytek also opted to enable the transfer of native signals (where the output sampling frequency is identical to that of the incoming one) as well as for an upsampling function to 192 kHz. So we can choose. Quite neat.... Trial and error.

Especially the professional user will find a wide range of possibilities to adjust to or improve performance. On the other hand, the Mytek Digital Stereo 192SD DAC offers so much signal processing quality for the hifi music aficionado that to him the extra functions need not be a problem. When the same recording was reproduced in the upsampling mode, there appeared to be more unrest/tension, but - admittedly - we did not make any blind A/B comparison.

On Channel Classics you will find a vast collection of interesting DSD downloads and among them various productions by the aforementioned violinist Rachel Podger. She plays for example with two colleagues the sparkling Pièces de Clavecin van Jean Philippe Rameau. In this recording the remarkable quality of the DSD recording process was demonstrated brilliantly.

Testing the device

During the time that I could test the Mytek Digital Stereo 192SD, I processed a lot of music which was recently recorded live. These recordings were made with modest yet high-grade technical means as well as with love and dedication in the Groningen Lutheran Church, a nearly perfect place for recording chamber music. The best recording was that of the baroque violin player Rachel Podger (cf. Channel Classics) with solo performances of works by Telemann, Bach and Biber. Especially the last part of the Rosenkranz sonatas, a slow passacaglia with a steady bass theme under an ancient Maria song with several variations, deeply impressed a breathless audience. It also made a profound impression on the soloist herself when she heard the recording reproduced with the Mytek in native (24 bit/48 kHz), perfectly rendering her restrained emotion.



Naturalness with a fine balance between pulse sounds and flowing violin lines.

Analogue aficionados would say: it sounds quite analogue, and so it does. Compliments to Mytek! Another live recording we enjoyed was that of Musica Temprana (www.musicatemprana.com), a group of musicians with an international background, passionately led by Adrián Rodriguez Van der Spoel. They played 17th century Latin American baroque music with a whole range of sounds, all instruments you can think of, voices, songs..... the works! The Groningen Lutheran Church was packed to the doors, because Musica Temprana had performed in the morning on TV in VPRO's music programme 'Vrije geluiden'. Mytek very realistically reproduced all instruments especially the drums. In addition to the pulse, the expression was well-nigh truly live. The acoustics of the fully packed church were rather 'dry', and we got a strong sense of being present there. Music reproduction simply can't be better than that.

Conclusion

It is easy to tell from this review that for the semi-professional user the Mytek Digital Stereo 192DSD is a marvellous device. But the music fan who wants more than a capable box with some inputs and outputs, should not hesitate to take the Mytek into consideration. The more so as Rudo Meijer of AudioSense, the importer and distributor, will expertly assist you in finding the optimum results wherever you want to use the Mytek.

Manufacturer: Mytek Digital (USA) / www.mytekdigital.com

Importer: AudioSense / www.AudioSense.nl

Price: € 1.499

Mytek? Mytek DSD dac Golden Ear 2013 Award!

The Mytek 192 DSD dac received the Golden Ear Award from the reputable audiomagazine 'The Absolute Sound'.

'if you need a DSD capable DAC with a FireWire interface the Mytek is the only game in town..'



Further information
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