



EarMen Colibri



Stereo+

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Bowers and Wilkins 804D4 The naked truth

Q-Acoustics Concept 50
Certainly not like everyone else

Marantz 40n
Very nice and well played

JBL L52
Attractive stand speaker

EAT Glo Petit
Impressive for the price

**Visiting Anzus Very
nice Danes**



News

New music

HiFi art project

ASTONISHINGLY SMALL

We've had streaming players on test that have been small, but none come close to Wattson Audio and their Emerson Digital. Fortunately, the sound quality does not depend on the sound being packaged in products with full width and large displays at the front.

Text:[Håvard Holmedal](#)

Wattson Audio is from Switzerland and it is obviously thought a little differently there in the yard. We are used to devices such as iFI Stream and Primary NP5s are small, but this streaming bridge is even smaller, has only the most important of outputs, and is three times as expensive. Fortunately, it can be heard that it is not in the budget class.

This device has been named "Digital", which in this context means that it only has digital outputs, but the manufacturer also has another variant that has a built-in digital converter and only a single set of analogue outputs. They take it easy there too, that is.

Advanced - not great

It is almost a little embarrassing to open some of the 44cm streamers on the market. Inside, there is only a power supply and some chips, and solid amounts of space and air. But then you will also be welcome

a display on the purchase and a somewhat richer selection of outputs.

The question is whether you need a display when you still play via a mobile phone or, in Wattson Audio's case, also Roon. Is there any need to sit on the sofa and squint at very compact graphics and text that either have very limited information or are tiny and almost unreadable. Maybe not. As for the equipment, obviously Wattson Audio could have equipped Emerson Digital with something other than an AES-EBU connector and a more common digital coax/RCA. But on the other hand - how many digital outputs do you normally use? I'm guessing there's only one, and that's clearly what the Swiss at Wattson Audio have in mind too.

The power supply is understandably external, but they didn't just rely on a cheap Chinese adapter. Nevertheless, I can't quite get rid of the feeling that this is an area where there are some opportunities





for improvements. Therefore, I also equipped myself with an S-Booster power supply which I used on and off in the test.

The cabinet itself can be driven over with a tank and the powder-coated surface also seems quite robust.

Wattson Audio has also not equipped the device with Bluetooth or WiFi. Here, in the name of simplicity, only wired networks are available.

Two separate clocks

Usually such players are equipped with a digital clock, and then it is calculated between 44.1 (+ 88.2 and 176.4kHz) and 48Hz (+ 96 and 192kHz). Wattson instead uses two separate clocks – one for each set of sample rates and has no variable clock or sync loop that recalculates between 44.1 and 48kHz. This in itself gives very low values of phase noise and jitter.

The two outputs (coax and AES-EBU) also each have their own modulator, and according to the manufacturers, this is the only way to do it if you want to adapt to both standards without making compromises.

Wattson Audio easily connects to Tidal, Qobuz and internet radio via the very well-functioning and intuitive app, but is also Roon-ready. The latter means that it immediately comes up as a source in the Roon ecosystem and via Roon you can also do the first unpacking of MQA to 96kHz from Tidal.

Use

That it can be used as an invisible streaming player well hidden behind the usual electronics in your living room system is an obvious possibility, but its size and ease of use also open the way for use in high-quality multi-room systems with an Emerson Digital connected to an integrated amplifier

ker with DAC or active speakers with digital input. The player can also be used by UPnP software such as mconnectHD, which is a clear and user-friendly program for iPhone/iPad. The interesting thing is that no matter which software you choose to use, it appears in the list of playable devices immediately and without any problems, and is still stable.

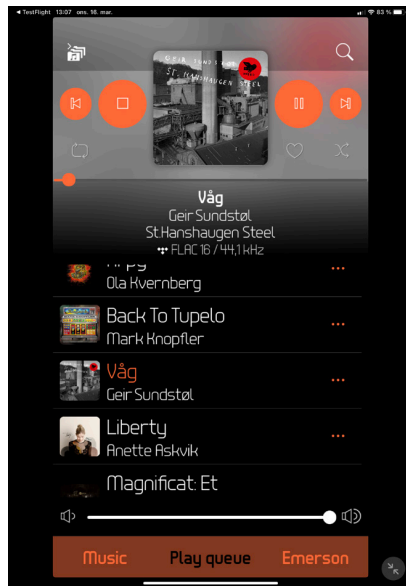
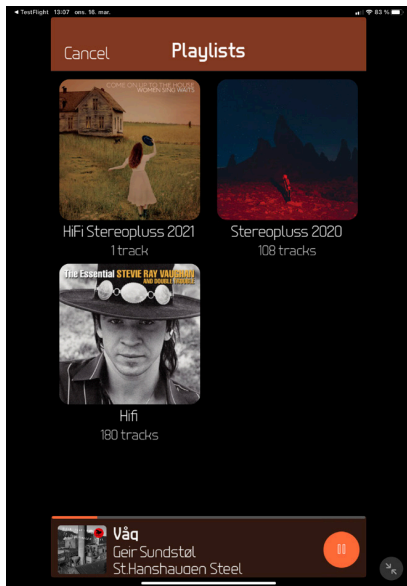
The app for Wattson Audio is good, and will be even better with the upcoming upgrade that I have used as a Beta in this test (via Testflight). It doesn't make much of a difference, but fixes a couple of unnecessary things that get in the way of functionality.

The sound

With only one digital output, you might think that devices like the Primare NP5, iFi Audio Stream, Arcam ST60 and Wattson Audio Emerson Digital which are devices I've had in quite recently would sound similar, but they don't. The differences are not huge, but on a well-balanced and precise stereo system there are clear audible differences that can definitely be important for the overall experience.

The Emerson Digital immediately reveals itself as a quiet, precise and surprisingly analog-sounding device. The dynamics and precision are also very good, and in sum this is a sound experience that is rich in information and details, but at the same time smooth and kind to the ear. It is obvious after only a few minutes of listening that the designer has good control over the digital signal flow through the device, and this not only results in a good and engaging music experience, but also a super-precise holography with an excellent focus on voices and instruments in particular at the front of the sound image. That simplicity





WE LIKE:

- Incredibly easy to set up
- Plays very detailed and precise
- Very smooth and "analogue" sound image

WE DON'T LIKE:

- Might be a bit too simple for some

STEREO+ MEANS:Wattson Audio Emerson DIGITAL is quick to connect, very easy to use and it sounds absolutely brilliant.

we see in construction and physical presence certainly does not characterize the music experience. The colorful and highly detailed rendering could just as well have come from any other device in the sub 20-25k price range. Obviously, it pays to make it simple. Now this is perhaps too easy for some buyers, and we see that it can fall a little short in some setups. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that it delivers sound at a pleasingly high level.

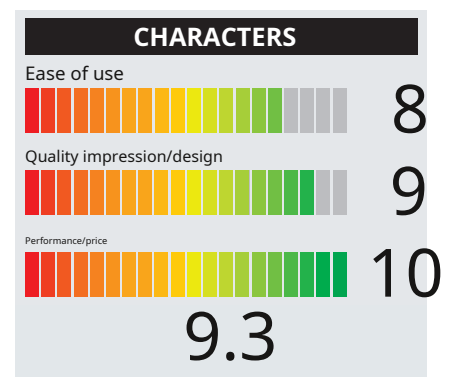
The listening is effortless, and it plays with a relaxing analogue character that can only be experienced on really good equipment. There are hardly any affordable devices that have the same absence of noise and "digital crackle".

The unit handles all types of music with the same stability and overview, and is just as convincing in smaller acoustic jazz ensembles as it is in large orchestras with choirs. No matter what you play, the result is neat and controlled, and the music has the same effortless, smooth and open sound quality. This of course requires that you have a proper digital converter (DAC), but whatever you choose in affordable price ranges, you can be sure that it is not the streamer that is the limiting factor.

Conclusion

If you manage with only a standard digital coax output (the other is AES-EBU), zero Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, a device that certainly does not impress in the hifi rack and you already have a very serviceable DAC somewhere in the system, there is every reason to try a Wattson Audio Emerson Digital.

Simplicity goes a little beyond flexibility and versatility, but you get this again in the form of a user-friendliness that surpasses the vast majority of digital products we've had. All you need is to connect it to power and a network cable, and download the good app. We had sound on the system after 30 seconds. Imagine if everything was as user-friendly and easy to set up!



Watson Audio Emerson DIGITAL

PRICE: NOK 16,990.-
 IMPORTER: Multiroom AS
 LINK: www.multiroom.no