

AUDIOMAT Maestro 4

Audiophile Fr

Audiomat Maestro 4

Origin : France

DAC – network player

2 S/PDIF Toslink digital inputs

1 Coaxial digital input

1 XLR digital input

1 USB input

1 Ethernet RJ45 input / optional network card

1 coaxial digital output

1 pair of XLR balanced analogue outputs

1 pair of RCA unbalanced analogue outputs

*Note: this is an automatic (read: bad) partial translation from the original review in French.
The full French review is in the French section.*

Let's remember that if AUDIOMAT has, since 1986, built its reputation on the design and production of internationally renowned tube amplifiers, the French manufacturer has also distinguished itself for many years on peripheral products such as phono preamplifiers and digital/analogue converters. A large number of them have been the subject of a test bench in these columns.

AUDIOMAT's new products are generally infrequent. The manufacturer prefers to design products that last over time. In addition to the evolutions of existing products, it sometimes happens that a new reference is born, as is the case with this Maestro converter in its fourth edition.

Visually, there is no difference between the Maestro 4 and its previous version, which was tested [HERE](#) 7 years ago. However, like all digital products, the successor to the Maestro 3 has been significantly updated, if not totally transformed. This converter is upgradeable: it can receive an optional network card and is available in a version with a power supply. As such, it will be referred to as the Maestro 4 Reference.

The presentation is sober and reassuring. The chassis and front panel are milled from aluminium - the whole unit rests on three conical feet to ensure optimal decoupling. In addition, AUDIOMAT delivers three cups (to be placed under the feet) to find the ideal balance point for decoupling.

In the middle of the front panel is a touch screen with 17 functions and 14 different colours. This screen ultimately serves as the user interface. The ergonomics are very pleasant to use. Its brightness can be adjusted until it is completely switched off.

Behind the touchscreen are several functions, including enabling or disabling the power supply for the USB and network inputs, and configuring the digital filters and DSD playback mode.

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As with the previous version, the manufacturer has completely separated the different cards. The version I have at my disposal has 4 independent cards: a digital card, an analogue card, a clock card supporting the engineered network card and a microcontroller/display card. With the exception of this last board, the other boards have been completely "redesigned" with a complete change of their respective schematics and components. The circuit of the analogue section is simpler and shorter. It allows the implementation of even higher quality components. The symmetrically configured analogue output stage comprises no less than 14 bipolar transistors.

The digital card has undergone major changes. It is a 32-bit / 384kHz DSD-compatible board and now uses an AKM AK4493SE chip instead of the AKM4495. There are significant changes to the clocks and distributions, as well as to the power supply distribution. The voltage regulators have been replaced by three new regulators with lower noise levels: 0.8 μ VRMS. The ALVC type logic switching circuit has been changed to a 500 Mhz transmission frequency. The quartz crystals have also been upgraded to achieve a Jitter value of 0.04ps RMS. Finally, the power supply capacitors have been more than doubled in value.

The rear panel features numerous digital inputs designed to fully exploit all the formats currently in use: 2 S/PDIF Toslink digital inputs, 1 RCA digital input, 1 XLR balanced digital input, 1 USB 2.0 High Speed, Class 2 compatible asynchronous / USB 2.0 PCM 32 bits / 384 kHz DSD 2.8 Mhz / 5.6 Mhz native input, 1 Ethernet Plug and Play UPnP/TM/AV 2.0 / DLNA Bit-perfect data transmission PCM & DSD. 1 coaxial digital output also completes the rear panel.

On the analogue side, AUDIOMAT has doubled its line outputs: the pair of very high quality RCA plugs bolted directly to the chassis and isolated from it is completed by a pair of XLR plugs which betray the balanced configuration of the output stage.



AUDIOMAT does not joke with the principle of power supply. It is therefore no surprise that the Maestro 4 is equipped with a completely separate power supply. Underneath the rather heavy aluminium ingot are two transformers, developed specifically for this product, with a unit value of 100 volts amperes - enough to "calm" the turbulence of the mains current and to overcome the problems of radiation and vibrations, and above all to ensure musical comfort. Each transformer has its own specific function: one is assigned to the analogue section and the other to the digital section. This power supply is connected to the converter by a gigantic, fully shielded "umbilical cord" and a plug that is no less shielded - the whole thing is made to measure. The current is thus conveyed in such a way that no disturbance is caused to the digital and analogue signals and the musicality is reduced.

The manufacturer offers a Reference version of the MAESTRO 4 which adopts (among other things) a more substantial power supply, i.e. 2 low induction transformers of 350 volts amps each.

I would like to thank AUDIOMAT and the designer of this product for the technical details concerning this source which was made available to me for a period of three months, allowing me to carry out this test bench.

Listening and impressions:

The listening tests were carried out at home with the following items:

- YBA Classic Player in CD transport mode
- YBA Classic 3 Delta preamplifier & YBA 3 Delta / double transformateur 2 x 400 VA power amp
- REGA EAR headphones amp & AUDIO-TECHNICA ATH-A2000Z headphones
- PEL Kantor loudspeakers
- ESPRIT Eterna digital cable
- ESPRIT Aura Interconnect
- YBA Diamond speakers cables

For power supply: FURUTECH F-TP 615 and ESPRIT Volta power strip, G-314Ag-18E power cable and FT-SWS-G wall socket of the same brand. ESPRIT Celesta & Eterna power cables.



Conclusion :

Choosing an AUDIOMAT device is a strong act. It is the adhesion to a targeted approach, based on the realism of sound reproduction. If this source is intended to convert digital data into analogue signals, it also succeeds in converting the most undecided to invest in a product which, musically speaking, stands out from the competition.

With the Maestro 3, I thought the manufacturer had reached the top of its game. The in-depth "redesign" of this converter shows that the margin of progress applied to the Maestro 4 brings a lot of additional things, including this extra soul that translates into a real "coup de coeur" to which no one can remain insensitive.

Review by Lionel Schmitt