

Unofficial translation from the test in Hjemmekino – (Norway's leading magazine for home cinema)

Luckily it is Norwegian !

6 stars / 6 possible

The market for Digital to Analogue Converters and smart USB-solutions for those who want to connect their computer to the HiFi system is growing. Today we will spend some time on this smart solution from Electrocompaniet.

There is a lot of D/A converters in the market already, but the needs are changing rapidly. The sale of CD players is almost not visible in the sale-statistics and the media-players are taking over. That is why there is hardly any DAC's to be found without a USB input.

The solution from Electrocompaniet is both practical and smart. They have put a USB port on the units back-panel, but in addition the PD 1 can also be feed using a RF-signal. This way you music can be streamed wirelessly from the small music streamer called EMS 1. When using the EMS 1 all your digital files on various hard disks on your PC or Mac can be transmitted without putting your computer in the living room.

Enough inputs

A few years ago we bought a DAC to upgrade any old CD-player, today we want to improve the sound from all kinds of digital boxes that circle around our home entertainment system. That's why you do not only find coax and optical inputs like it used to be. On the PD 1 you will find 2 SPDIF coax, one optical TOSlink, one USB and a RF input where you connect a small antenna to communicate whit the EMS 1. With three digital inputs you can connect your CD-player, media-player and your HD PVR form Canal Digital or GET.

There are also 2 sets of outputs, one XLR for those who has a balanced pre-amplifier and a RCA for the rest. The unit is compact, but unlike many other Electrocompaniet has chosen to build it in full size – that is something we like.

The USB-input

The USB-input needs no driver, but you are likely to have to adjust your settings in the control-panel if you are running Windows 7 or Mac OS. That should not be too difficult.

If you are using the small EMS 1 box there is a couple of things you should know. In the rear of the PD 1 there is a channel indicator, you will find a similar on the EMS 1. They must be set to the same channel, if you experience interference you can change to another channel.

The PD 1 in use

I am not to keen about all the blue leds in the front that shows the volume. In a room with little light they are unnecessarily sharp. Luckily they can be dimmed all the way down, but then they will not give you any information. The RF-receiver was very easy to set-up and it worked instantly. We are still a bit sceptical to the transmission of music by RF. To me it sounded like there were some phase problems. *Amused to death* by Roger Waters was played

from my disk and we did not hear to much of the three-dimensional sound effects, maybe this was caused by the RF transmission. For best possible results we would recommend you to use a USB cable. The remote control is rather cheap.

Great sound

I used a couple of transports to test the PD 1, a Sony XA-5400ES CD-player and a Philips BD-player. It was interesting to hear that these players sounded very similar. The perspective of the sound is tighter and there is more room between the instruments with the Sony, but all in all the difference was small.

I also connected my Mac directly to the USB input, to me the sound was more correct compared to using the RF-link and I did not have to turn my head to get the picture right.

No matter what PD 1 can do to improve the sound from various digital sources it is the improvement that it gives to a good transport that really matters. And we can say – it really does improve the sound from your transport. The PD 1 does not try to be super-analytic, but there is no lack of superfine details in the entire frequency range. The sound is very well balanced. DP 1 has a rather wide bass with a solid mid-bass, when playing Infected Mushroom we really got to hear what a good DAC can do in a system. The sonic picture became very tidy and we got a bass with lots of body and a lovely tickle in the stomach. The music also became much more precise compared to when it came directly from the SONY CD-player.

Also the mid-range was improved because it was much tidier, the PD 1 added more space for the instruments and voices, the dynamics was also improved drastically.

It is natural to compare the PD 1 with the DAC's from Hegel and BelCanto. The differences are mainly in the sonic qualities not in how the reproduce details, how clean the sound is nor the dynamics. Hegel is a bit more analytic and the BelCanto 1.5 is a bit more detailed and dissolved at the same time the sonic image is nicer. The BelCanto is more costly and you would expect it to play better. Still the same we prefer the sonic quality from the Electrocompaniet DAC.

Conclusion

The PD 1 plays really well. Balanced, homogeneous and pleasant. It makes it worth its price as a DAC, but the USB-input and the smart RF-option makes it one of the most interesting DAC's in the market.

The tiny EMS 1 does what it is supposed to do, but does not add any improvements to the sound.

We like

Great and balanced sound
Beautiful perspective

We don't like

The remote control
The blue LED's in the front