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MUNICH 2019

High End Munich 2019: Totaldac Brings TotalPower to DAC Line

Herb Reichert | May 16, 2019



LA

From the window in my Brooklyn bunker, Vincent Brient's totaldac company looks like one of the coolest, most independent, audio companies in Europe. (totaldac is located near Mont Saint-Michel, France).

totaldac is not owned by a multinational audio cartel, it is an owner-operated company with a unique, highly-musical, audio-aesthetic. I totally get totaldac.



totaldac's d1-tube-mk2 DAC has been 'the DAC I want' since I first experienced it at CES 2016. Other than maybe the MSB Select, the R-2R totaldac is the least DAC-sounding of any DAC I've heard. When it plays recordings it does not sound digital or analogue. Instead, it conveys this

slightly dark, deep, super-quiet transparent spaciousness that I find riveting – and very natural. The space around performers exhibits vibrating life; but it has no static, electronic haze, or robot-mechanicalness - like most chip-DACs.


The tube version of the d1 does impart a bit of luminescence; but life is short, and tube-glow sounds like French Champaign tastes.

Last year, at High End Munich 2017, totaldac's Brient surprised me with the brilliant d150 wide-range horn + woofer speaker. Just seeing it set my brain in a Zen-like mood. Vincent said he designed the d150 so he could demo and evaluate his DAC creations. The sound from the speaker was the same as the d1 DAC sound I described above: super-quiet, transparent, and spacious in a highly-descriptive way.



My surprise this year was the new totaldac Amp-1 amplifier; which, Brient says came out of a specific need. He explains; "In 2018 Alon Wolf, founder of Magico, contacted me to evaluate a Totaldac source. I sent a d1-twelve-mk2 and a d1-driver to Magico's demo room in California. Alon decided to keep the DAC and it was an opportunity for me to get a pair of Magico M6 speakers. I had several amplifiers on hand to drive the M6. Triode, pentode, transistor class A, class AB and class D amplifiers. None could exhibit all qualities of the M6 at the same time. [L] [SEP]

"I tried many amplifiers from the best brands, at any price, and again I could not get the real-life timbre and openness of tubes with the drive capability of the biggest transistor amplifiers and without harsh sound so often found with transistor amplifiers.

 "So I developed my amplifier for my own need, starting from a prototype already made by an experimented partner, and I was free to optimize it my way."

The hybrid stereo Amp-1 uses a triode voltage amplifying stage and a high current transistor buffer. It effects 28dB of gain, and delivers 160W/8Ω, 300W/4Ω, and 500W/2Ω and costs €19,900 (including VAT) and played the Magico M6 with a fresh, pliant authority. The Magico M6s have sounded wildly different each time I auditioned them. Eight-out-of-ten times the M6s sounded hard and not-pliant. With the Amp-1, they almost completely relaxed. With the Amp-1, they opened up spatially and dynamically.

I asked Brient to play a solo-piano recording and was surprised by the scale and fullness of the instrument that appeared between the M6s. Tone was the most life-like I have heard from Magico. If the totaldac Amp-1 can deliver this much goodness through the Magicos – I can only imagine what it could do with my Harbeths.



COMPANY INFO

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COMMENTS



totaldac Amp-1

Submitted by Everclear on May 16, 2019 - 10:54am

So, is a review of totaldac Amp-1 forthcoming? :-)



Wonder if Vincent Brient tried the ...

Submitted by Ortofan on May 20, 2019 - 10:14pm

... PS Audio BHK Stereo 250 tube/transistor hybrid amplifier?

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Rogue Audio Class-D hybrids

Submitted by Everclear on May 23, 2019 - 9:12am

Or The Rogue Audio Medusa and/or Hydra stereo-amps? :-)

.....

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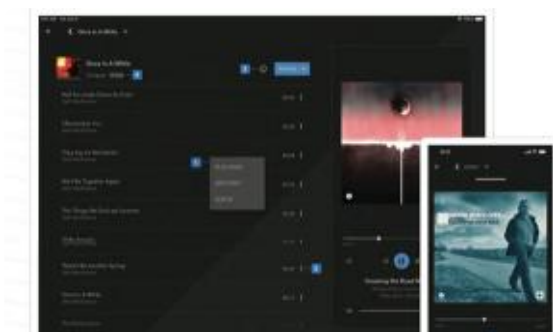
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