

# totaldac d1-seven

Michael Lavorgna | Feb 15, 2018



**Device Type:** Digital to Analog Converter

See [Specifications](#)

**Availability:** Direct

**Price:** €19,000 incl VAT, €17,450 excl VAT. D1-six to d1-seven

Upgrade: €5,050 excl VAT

**Website:** [www.totaldac.com](http://www.totaldac.com)



I first reviewed a totaldac, the [d1-Dual DAC](#), in September of 2014 wherein I said, "...you end up with a presentation that sounds so natural, so life-like, it leads you directly to the music being played with very little reminder that you are in fact listening through a hi-fi." In 2016, I gathered up the funds to buy a [totaldac d1-six](#). Here's what I said about that, "...I am meaningfully delighted, over and over again." As we all know seven is bigger than six, which leads me to believe the d1-seven...



Vincent Brient, the man behind totaldac, is (typically) succinct about what makes a seven a seven and not a six. Here's Vincent:

The d1-seven DAC has been created for the seven-year anniversary of Totaldac. It was made to be the far best sounding one-box DAC in the Totaldac range, making something very special in the Totaldac range.

If you check out the [Specifications page](#), you'll get a bit more info on the changes some of which have to do with making the d1-seven's innards *quieter*. Remember, bits may be bits when they remain in the digital realm, but when digital gets converted to analog, you can't ignore what goes on in the analog domain. Like noise. But here's a tip—the more time you spend thinking about why a DAC's design makes it sound the way it does, the more energy you spend trying to pin sounds to aspects of design, the further you get from the real reason (hint: it's everything).

The d1-seven's resistor ladder DAC contains the same 300 pieces of Vishay 0.01% VAR Bulk Metal Foil resistors as my d1-six and it also shares most of the six's design right down to the chassis that holds everything together. One of the things I appreciate about totaldac is the fact that if I had purchased that d1-dual back in 2014, and believe me I wanted to, I could have it upgraded to a d1-seven today. Nice.

The review sample d1-seven arrived about a month ago and before it got warm from its winter journey, it was sitting on my rack playing music. And it pretty much hasn't

stopped since.

I start working on a review weeks before I write a word. As I listen, I begin to construct ideas and words around what it is I'm hearing—how best to convey to you my experience. By the time I sit down to type, words pretty much rush out like water through a break in the damn. That said, the rate of flow varies from review to review but when writing about every totaldac I've written about, the real trick is in deciding how much not to say.

The d1-seven improves on the d1-six's ability to communicate a recording's acoustic (that word, acoustic came into my head early on and never went away). What I mean by that is the improvements I heard were not confined to a single, or even a few, aspects of reproduction. Rather, the entire musical presentation now breaths with more natural and meaningful life.

The d1-seven is by far one of the most stunning DACs I've had the pleasure to hear my music through. As chance would have it (not really) , I also have dCS Rossini DAC here for a follow-up review and while it's too early in its stay to talk about any meaningful comparisons, I'll get to that in the dCS review, I will say these are two of the finest DACs I've heard. Period.



The totaldac d1-seven excels at reproducing music's life, energy, and delicate nuance. Many DACs, most DACs I've heard, get many things right but they tend to ride



roughshod over nuance. Some DACs appear to be more concerned with a first impression, wanting to impress with some aspect(s) of sound which in my experience grows wearisome over time. In the worst case, a brash and bold DAC can make me want to *stop* listening to music. That is bad.



Every totaldac I've heard has made me not want to stop listening to music. Sometimes, when I'm doing things other than sitting in my red Eames LCW, I'm doing so because I have other things to get done. With the d1-seven playing, the red Eames LCW draw was more compelling, more demanding, than it's ever been. Once seated, there's a lock-in into the space and time of the recording that is at once addictive and entrancing. Every aspect of a recording—space, sounds, movement, texture, color, meaning—are conveyed with an uncanny realness. Come to think of it, *rightness* may be the better word.

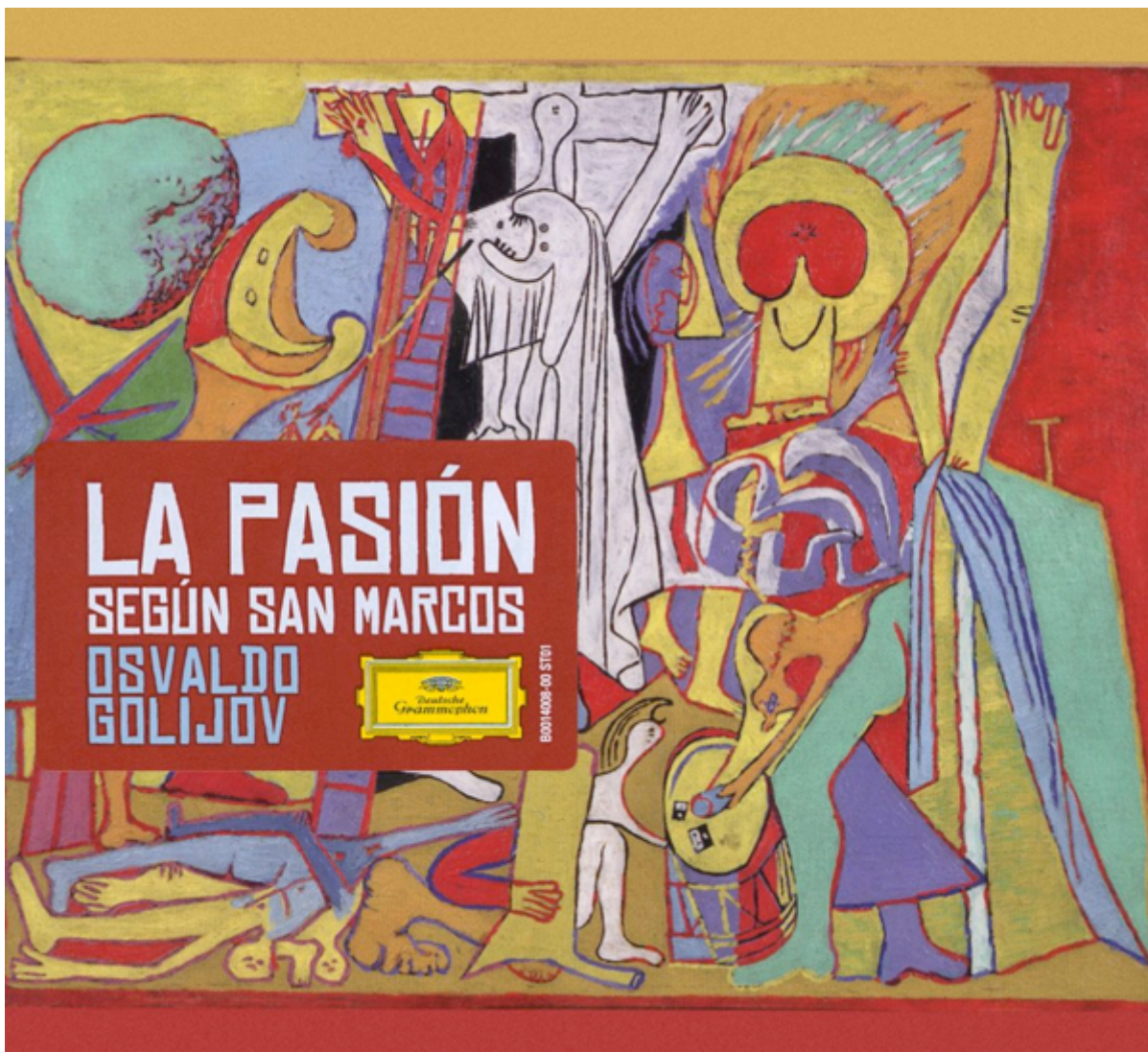


Forceful music, like Raime's "Coax" from *Tooth* is even more forceful through the d1-seven as compared to the d1-six. The sound has more body, more weight, more drama and more impact. Delicate music like anything from Félicia Atkinson is even more delicate, more nuanced, and more touching through the d1-seven. Acoustic voices, from quartets to symphonies, are given as broad a spectrum of tone and color as I've heard from files. While we're here, tone and color, people who enjoy listening to records know exactly what I'm talking about—the voice of the real, the voice of natural. Something some/most digital has a hard time holding on to without tweaking it out of proportion.



The sound image is also more relaxed, more spacious, and better defined as are the various elements within. This allows for an easier time following a bass line or a violin or a cello or a voice or a buzzsaw within a larger group context. At the same time, the larger group context is a more cohesive whole and the various voices within are more distinctively their own. It's as if Vincent took the d1-six and added more acoustic, more of what makes music music.





The d1-seven, as is the case with every totaldac I've heard, loves all music in all formats. It's not picky in any way, shape, or form. totaldac's are also very democratic in that they really don't care very much about formats or resolution as everything from CD-quality on up are reproduced with the same qualities. This is very important for me as my tastes in music are guided by music, not formats.



Regular readers know I'm a fan and user of Roon. When people ask, "Does Roon sound better than..." I have to stop them because Roon has made the entire experience of listening to file-based music as compelling as listening to records. And that's big. Besides, it sounds good too. When Roon radio took over what music I was listening to, it had no problem jumping around in ways I wouldn't have thought (I love that). This includes going from music on my NAS to Tidal and back and forth and on and on (I love that, too). Never, not once, did I think, "Oh, that's Tidal and this is 24/96." Never. That's *the goal of every DAC*, imo. Of course you have to have the rest of your system and network in order in order to get there but that's another story. My Leben CS600/DeVore Fidelity gibbon X and dCS Netowrk Bridge feeding the totaldac via AES (because it sounds best) are a match made in heaven (and you know they have one hellofa band).





Imagine a technology that could take the music you own and the music you get from streaming and make it all sound better. Obviously, noticeably better. In every way, shape, and form. You wouldn't have to re-buy music you already own or focus on a particular format like DSD or MQA to get there. And by better, I mean more engaging, more moving, and more essential. Sounds great, right?

In my experience, which is now 6+ years at AudioStream and a few decades before that, listening to digital replay hasn't always been good. At times, it has truly sucked so bad I stopped listening to music. I was frustrated, unsettled, and generally not at all happy with digital. That's bad.

Thankfully, digital replay has come a long way. Roon has managed to bring meaning and discovery into the file-based music experience and some DACs, like any from totaldac, bring meaning and discovery back into the listening experience unencumbered by digital's many shortcomings. If you want to hear your file-based music at its best, at the peak of its acoustic power, I recommend the totaldac d1-seven as your guide [footnote 1].

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1. I will be sending my d1-six back to France so Vincent can transform it into a d1-seven—a true tune up. I expect my red Eames LCW will also transform from chair into seat of my pants music transport.

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Also in-use during the d1-seven review: totaldac d1-six