

Summary of Reviewing the Audio Note DAC 5 Special (a.k.a. Super DAC)

A Review Preview
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The Audio Note DAC 5 Special is beyond reach for most of us; but the hobby of high-end audio can be an extremely personal and private one for many of us, and for what the Super DAC can do to enrich our experience on this journey of life, it is invaluable.

Epilogue: Hardware over software

While many of us believe in continuously advancing the state-of-the-art of the Redbook CD format via more advanced and complex algorithms, we are now presented with an indisputably significant testimony of how far a DAC system can go with no over- or upsampling techniques.

Alarmed as I was at the inescapable shortfalls of having high expectations before seeing a movie or auditioning equipment, I nevertheless expected an unprecedented experience from a D/A converter costing twice as much as many other prestigious companies' complete digital systems. Despite the disadvantage of the preconception, I found the Audio Note DAC 5 Special capable of a sound of such high standard that no prior high-end experience of mine could've prepared me for it.



Despite my experiences with state-of-the-art products past and present, such as Sonic Frontiers' SFD-2, Wadia's 27, 47 Laboratory's Progression and Sony's SCD-777ES SACD player, I have never experienced the degree of textural and tonal distinction in instrument separation as presented by the Super DAC in my 2-channel system.

For readers whose listening habit centers around recordings of strictly audiophile concerns, acquisition of SACD players would be an economically more viable solution. On the other hand, advantages of the format accorded by availability of affordable, solidly engineered players is continuously and severely diminished by the crawling release of titles, a situation made more severe by the fact that audiophiles are the primary target audience of SACDs.

In my case, the fact that a majority of my listening is via ordinary CDs necessitates a reliance on hardware quality for sonic excellence, which makes equipment like the Super DAC all the more important. To me, the Audio Note Super DAC made my daily music listening incalculably more rewarding.

Manufacturers past and present have touted the longevity of their DACs for incorporations of advanced technologies and circuitry uniqueness; but the rapidly continuous and accumulative nature of advancements in digital audio technology created an inadvertent marketing dilemma if a DAC's strength lies in the incorporation of the latest development.

I believe there will be support from many if I opined of the maturity of the DAC technology, and from my experience with less advanced but ingeniously implemented designs, such as Audio Note's DAC 5

Special and 47 Laboratory's Progression DAC, I believe it is time for manufacturers to focus on the execution of selected DAC platforms in order to gain significant ground.

The protested absence of high-end DACs from Audio Note in the early exploding and lucrative market of the 80s and 90s was a case study of an influential enterprise championed by a single individual's vision. The market at that time was filled with DACs with largely identical technological offerings, and Peter's refusal to make his company look like everybody else was a reflection of a strong determination in the face of certain financial rewards his company and its reputation would've garnered.

Having fallen behind many companies in reaping substantial profits during digital audio's infantile fever, Audio Note's delayed entry into the DAC market in the mid 90s packed a powerful arising with thoroughly developed systems. Audiophiles who choose to invest into AN's products will surely find the company's firm stance assuring and rewarding.