

Audioengine D2 Music Streamer

<http://audio-head.com/audioengine-d2-music-streamer/>

June 30, 2012



Home audio systems are being presented with an increasing number of music distribution and streaming options within our dwellings. While some of the more mainstream options such as Apple's Airplay or steaming to a gaming device offer easy solutions, many audiophiles may wish for more control over their music's fidelity. AudioEngine's D2 wireless DAC is here to assuage those woes.

The D2 is fairly simple in function; it transmits sound from point A to point B. It does have a few tricks up its sleeve that increase its versatility depending on your system. On one end you have a transmitting device. It offers USB and optical *inputs*. The good news is that you don't have to attach it to an additional power supply wall wart if you decide to utilize the USB. The other receiving unit has both and RCA analog outputs and a digital optical output. I actually like the versatility of this option. If you wish to implement the D2 into your system but already have a high-end DAC that you love, you can just drop this component into the chain via the optical port. The device also supports USB to SPDIF conversion so you can save a few bucks there as well.



The Setup

The setup was ridiculously easy. I just plugged in everything and it went. No driver issues, no connectivity issues, no additional buttons to push really. When I tested it though my MacBook Air's USB port everything worked fine straight out of the gate. Both iTunes and Decibel (in hog mode playing lossless FLAC) ran smoothly. For the individual who likes simplicity, this product does have an edge over some of the server-based streaming options. For one, there is no need to load additional media server software on your computer. Additionally, I have suffered some connectively issues with both Squeezebox and PS3 streaming, the latter of which has proven to be extremely sluggish to the point where it hardly seems practical for everyday use. Even Squeezebox music server suffered from reliability issues in my experience.

The Tradeoff

When compared to the Logitech Squeezebox ([full review here](#)) the D2 offers some of the same functionality, but it really depends how you want to control your tunes. The Squeezebox can tap into many of the popular streaming services, play native FLAC, etc. from the control of an external interface. The D2 can play the same games and more but is confined to control from your computer (you could of course still remote control your computer from an iPad in a pinch). The edge for the D2 in this situation is really that it is 100% versatile and 100% compatible with everything that is out there. This also gives you a bit more control over playback quality and the opportunity to fine-tune your source. The Squeezebox has always provided me with decent playback for music streaming services, but there are not many hardware options out there that can compete with the audio quality that you can get from MOG running on the computer-native player (in the US). Both units do top out at 24bit/96KHz.

The Sound

The analog outputs from the Squeezebox have always been enough to just get by. I have heard them used in varying setups and the end result has always left me a bit uninspired. When compared to the D2 analog output, you can easily see where the extra cost comes into play. The D2 has a clear edge in resolution. Stevie Nicks vocals from the album "Rumors" (24/96 FLAC) had a much more life-like presence to them than the Squeezebox was able to provide. I also felt the D2 gave the music a bit more depth and a three dimensional quality that I like to hear from my speakers. I don't think I am alone in this regard either. I am starting to see more and more people offer mod upgrades for the Squeezebox in order to up the quality for the little streamer.



If you love to host your music playback from your computer and are looking for an option to wirelessly connect to your home stereo or DAC, the AudioEngine D2 may very well be the solution you are seeking. It offers true plug-and-play wireless playback (via USB or optical SPDIF) coupled with a solid 24bit/96KHz DAC.

<http://audioengineusa.com/Store/Audioengine-D2>