

## M2Tech Young MkIII

The third version of the DAC Young offers so much more versatility, but the fundamental novelty for those aiming at high quality sound is compatibility with native DSD.

The Young has reached the third version; I think readers are well aware of my preference for the two previous versions of M2Tech's DAC, which I have even long used as a touchstone in the testing of digital sources, not only for the excellent value for money, but for the intelligence of the project; starting from the additional functions compared to a normal DAC (the Young is in effect a preamplifier), to finish the separate power supply Van Der Graaf sold separately, with a remarkable jump in performance at the cost of a minimum waste in the upgrade: a mobile phone power supply. The Young MkIII maintains the same reduced dimensions as the previous versions, if we want it seems in 1:2 scale compared to a typical rack device, but the line has been refined with the rounding of the edges that soften the line.

On the front we have a single button to turn on, a liquid crystal display (wisely excludable) and a multifunction knob with a built-in button that allows access to the configuration menu, the input selector and volume control, if you use the Young also as a preamp.

Among the various configuration options, worthy of note that allows you to vary the output level from 5 V to 10 V, fundamental if you use the Young directly connected to the power amplifiers, but as usual - in my house - the setting with the highest level sounds a little better even passing through my preamplifier; I imagine that, as usual, it is a question of impedances.

Another useful setting - also accessible from the remote control - is the phase inversion that - always in my house - curiously tends to be much more audible with the DAC than with the analog sources, and in this case it remains a mystery to me.

On the back we have the usual digital inputs: USB, coaxial, optical and balanced, so we have the input for the power supply, the analogue output available only in balanced format - but provided with XLR-to-RCA adapters - and an analogue RCA input, which will then allow those who use the Young as a preamplifier to connect, for example, a phono stage.

It's not over, because we also have a Bluetooth antenna, with the MQA and Qualcomm aptX logos near it; the Young can therefore also be used as a streaming terminal; moreover, the same antenna can be used to control the Young with a smartphone, instead of the excellent and complete remote control supplied.

But of course, what interests us most is inside. The project is a substantial evolution of the previous version; the input signal is managed by the Xilinx FPGA interface, the DAC is the "usual" Texas Instruments PCM1795; similar to the previous version is also the proprietary output buffer, equipped with a passive anti-alias filter, as well as integrators that remove the offset of the current/voltage converters, which in turn drive the volume/buffer control CS3318.

What is fundamental for me is compatibility with native DSD, up to 256x; if we want the need to use the DoP it was the element that had most aged the previous version. Or at least: the first time I listened to a DAC capable of reproducing the DSD without the DoP's bats, it was very clear to me that the native DSD had an extra gear.

Turned to the ratings, be patient if I just check that the streaming works, certainly will be very welcome to younger people, but it's not for me: just imagine, even with movies on YouTube I prefer to download them and then see them as I like, you can not change your mind when you've been a collector all your life; in any case, what interests me is absolute performance.

For the record, I decide to try the Young MkIII connected to the old version of the external power supply Van Der Graaf, which I imagine is not too different from the new version; given the level of the device it seems right to try it in conditions that can best express its qualities.

We also specify, although there should be no more need, that now the DAC can play in slightly different ways; we have already seen how just changing the output level changes slightly the sound (and it can not be a psychological problem of volume position, because my preamp allows me to adjust the input switch, or to compensate for the change of level of the source), and more sensitive

changes can be made by operating on digital filters; personally I prefer the default settings "sharp rolloff" for the PCM and FIR 1 for the DSD, and in these conditions I perform the listening tests; if you prefer a warmer and softer sound, it is certainly worth trying the alternative settings.

The listening session runs quietly and without major twists.

After a few comparisons with the old version, it became clear to me that in M2Tech they mainly worked and fine on refining without distorting the project; the sound setting remains that typical of the company: rigor, speed and detail, with the right dose of heat. If we limited ourselves to PCM we could also conclude that there is the union dose of improvement compared to the previous model to justify the new; in short, nothing transcendental, but audible.

As expected, the matter is decidedly different when you switch to DSD: the native signal is felt all right; one of those hyperbole to be heard from humanist would almost be fired, noting how the DSD, alfin freed from the chains of encapsulation in the DoP that mortified it, finally flows with an airy liquidity of unheard-of naturalness!

Oh, I reread it and, having made the tare on the trombone language, it is not that it is far from the truth, indeed. Actually, beyond the usual considerations on the stamp and the quality of the detail, you immediately notice a sensation of greater naturalness and vitality, which seem to derive from the greater speed on the transients and the best damping, at times I even had the impression of greater dynamic.

After giving me a demeanor, after all it is about having brought the development of the DSD to the same level of the PCM, step to the comparison with the magnificent Nadac, with which I continue to be in honeymoon relationships.

In such a comparison, against one of the best DACs on the market, and which incidentally costs ten times as much, it is only a question of measuring the extent of the defeat.

Mind you: we were already starting from an honorable position for the second version, that in this configuration, both DACs equipped with a dedicated external power supply, I think I had quantified in a couple of scant marks. Tacca: a very empirical measure to define that level of difference sufficient to be audible; if we want, enough to be able to say that one is better than the other. Honestly, apart from the high leveling of the DSD performance, at the end of the fair the impression remains more or less the same, perhaps because the confirmation of the progress of the DSD section is the thing that is most noticeable.

In short, when I try these products on the threshold of reasonableness for costs, or of the wall of truth for performances, in the end I find myself regularly making the usual judicious speech about how subtle the differences in hi-end products are and how much these differences are further narrow down as you go up. The question is where one puts his own limit of reasonableness, and here each for himself, we are adults and vaccinated (at least I hope).

Personally I find that the price range in which the Young is located, if only for the psychological threshold of one thousand euro (or two thousand including the feeder Van Der Graaf) is the upper limit of reasonableness, over there are the follies of the hi -end. So, to say: as long as I was able to consider unreasonable to exceed this threshold for digital expenditure (that the vinyl is unreachable), I found it very well with previous versions of Young, although the rest of the system is in a decidedly band higher.

This type of target is certainly directed by the Young MkIII, an intelligent product, in the sense of project efficiency, versatility and ease of upgrading without waste. The alternatives in this range are now so many that it would be at least imprudent launch into absolute claims of superiority; I feel, however, to enthusiastically confirm M2Tech's Young's recommendation as one of the best products in its range, both in terms of sound quality and goodness of the project.

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