

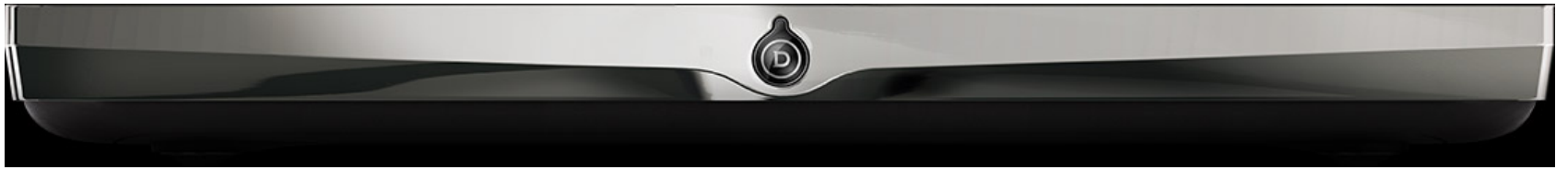
Devialet 200 & 400 Review



There's no question Devialet builds beautiful products. From the moment one opens the box it's easy to see this company

is the Apple of HiFi. Unboxing a Devialet amplifier is like opening a present to oneself. Beautifully packaged, the amplifier comes out of the box with an absolutely perfect mirror finish to the chassis. The same can be said for the one of a kind remote control. Right from the start my experience with Devialet was luxurious. I can see why Devialet has become a media darling and why the press has unanimously drooled over everything the company has released. Are the products that good or are the stunning looks and unique design fooling everyone? I set to find out, first with the Devialet 200, then with a pair of Devialet 400 monoblocks.

Devialet has built an incredibly versatile amplifier platform. Describing what a Devialet 200 actually is can be challenging because of this versatility. Using the online Configurator it's possible to turn this product into an amp with four digital coaxial inputs or an amp with a phono input and many things in between. It's also possible to configure the 200 for a single input such as asynchronous USB, WiFi, Ethernet, TosLink, or AES, and disable all other inputs. Heck, it's even possible to turn a coaxial input into an output or use the USB port as an output for digitization of vinyl. Devialet is serious when it says the inputs and outputs are fully configurable. In addition to fully configurable, the entire Devialet line of amplifiers is fully upgradable because of the EVO platform. Prior to starting this review I received the Devialet 170. shortly after receiving this product Devialet released a firmware upgrade that transformed the 170 into a 200. As well as increasing the output from 170W to 200W, Devialet also added its SAM technology via firmware update. SAM stands for Speaker Active Matching and enables the amplifier to adapt the signal to the speakers provided Devialet has measured the specific model of speaker. This SAM measurement database contains nearly 175 speakers, including the TAD CR1 speakers I used for this review.



When configuring the Devialet 200 for my system I preferred to enable a single digital input and disable everything else. I didn't hear a sonic difference between this single input mode and leaving everything else enabled, but the audiophile in me just felt better about disabling anything extra.

My starting configuration was the Devialet 200 as a stereo amplifier / DAC and the Ethernet input enabled. I installed the Devialet AIR software on a Windows computer running JRiver Media Center, and selected the AIR device as the audio output within JRMC. This configuration enabled me to use the JRemote / JRiver combination that I and many members of the Computer Audiophile Community love. Readers should keep in mind that this Ethernet connection doesn't support UPnP / DLNA. Devialet wanted what it considered was a better method of transporting network audio, so it developed AIR (Asynchronous Intelligent Route). AIR supports lossless streaming, very low latency, and very low jitter with the Devialet master clock controlling this asynchronous protocol. AIR requires a small piece of software be installed on a Mac or PC to enable the Devialet 200 to appear as an audio device on the computer. Via wired Ethernet Devialet AIR works awesome. No dropouts and not a single instance of the 200 falling off the network (as can happen with UPnP / DLNA devices). Everything from 16/44.1 up through 24/192 played as smooth as silk. On the other hand, using Devialet AIR with the WiFi interface wasn't as successful. I was unable to play 24/176.4 and 24/192 content without severe distortion from dropped data packets. I don't believe my wireless network is an issue because I have been streaming 24/192 audio via WiFi to the Auralic Aries without a problem. Both devices support 802.11n but the 200 only supports the 2.4 GHz wireless band whereas the Aries supports the 5 GHz band as well.

I used the Ethernet input first because I was very interested in testing its performance and Devialet AIR, but during most of the review period I used the Auralic Aries as the music source component and connected it to the 200 via USB or AES, depending on the interface I was testing at the time. Both interfaces support up

through 24/192 PCM audio but don't support playback of DSD in either native of DoP format. My guess is that Devialet may eventually support DSD, however DSD doesn't make that much sense considering the powerful PCM based DSP used inside the entire line of Devialet products. To take advantage of this DSP all the DSD would need to be converted to PCM anyway.

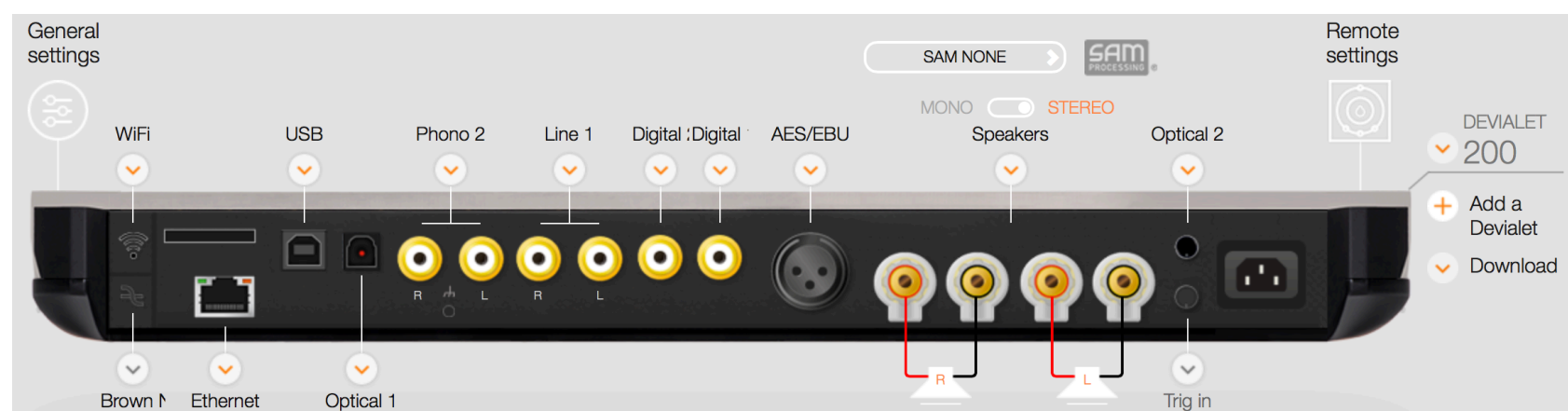
Before diving in head first, I should mention that one interesting configuration I used during the review was running the Devialet 200 as a preamp / DAC connected to a pair of Pass Labs XA 160.5 monoblocks. I used this configuration as a test for people who may be thinking about switching to a Devialet unit, but who don't want to get rid of their large amplifier investment just yet. Maybe some people are a bit skeptical and would like to test the Devialet capabilities before jumping in with both feet. This preamp / DAC configuration enables just that. I was very satisfied with the performance of this configuration. The Devialet DAC sounded very nice in combination with the smoothness of the Pass amplifiers. Using the beautiful Devialet remote control is also a nice benefit to running the 200 as a preamp / DAC.

The Devialet 200 in a stereo configuration connected directly to my TAD CR1 speakers is a great combination. Listening to Natalie Merchant's Tigerlily album was a treat. On the opening track, San Andreas Fault, the vocals may have been a touch more veiled than I am used to but they were still rich and compelling. Bass control was superb on Carnival as the opening baselines were crystal clear. Each note was delineated well from the others rather than reproducing one large bass-like sound. The Devialet 200 definitely has good bass.

Listening to Christina Aguilera's Save me From Myself enables the Devialet 200 to really shine. On this track, with just a female vocal and backing acoustic guitar, the 200 is incredibly seductive. The smoothness of Christina's voice and the audible detail as she transitions from line to line (lyrically) are stellar.

The Kansas City Orchestra's version of Britten's Orchestra has long been one of my favorite classical pieces. It doesn't hurt that it's a Reference Recordings version either. My favorite track is Passacaglia. On this track the opening violin sounds wonderfully soothing through the Devialet 200. The low end is powerful yet controlled about two minutes into the track and again shortly after the five minute mark. There is a plethora of detail to be heard throughout the rest of the track and the Devialet delivers this detail wonderfully.

No product is without its issues and one fault I've found with the 200 is a slight lack of low level resolution when the volume isn't pumped up quite a bit. Fortunately once the volume is in the 200's wheelhouse the resolution is very good.



Speaker Active Matching

While configuring the Devialet 200 online I also switched the remote control's Tone button to work as a SAM on/off button. This enabled me to switch SAM off or on in an instant to compare the sonic characteristics of the technology to the standard "SAMless" sound. I think it's fair to say that SAM has very different results with different loudspeakers. A speaker that needed some corners cut to save manufacturing costs may receive a larger benefit from SAM than an all out assault loudspeaker where cost is no object. My subjective viewpoints on SAM are thus only valid for the combination of Devialet and TAD CR1 loudspeakers.

When listening to Natalie Merchant's Tigerlily album I didn't hear much difference between SAM enabled and SAM disabled. The most marked sonic difference could be heard in a larger soundstage when SAM was enabled. This enlarged soundstage may come off as a bit synthetic sounding to some listeners, myself included. I preferred SAM off.

In my system SAM made absolutely no audible difference during the Christina Aguilera track Save Me From Myself. Perhaps this is due to the fact that SAM only operates on the lower frequencies and those frequencies are few and far between on this track. I had no preference for SAM on or off.

Passacaglia and the entire Britten album fared much the same as the Natalie Merchant music. The sonic difference was mainly in a slightly wider soundstage, although I'm not sure I can get used to the sound. I preferred SAM off.

Adding in another 200 to make a pair of 400s

Seeking to upgrade my Devialet experience I turned the 200 into a 400 Master and added a second 400 as a Slave. The configuration of this was done via the online Configurator with just a few clicks and SD cards inserted into the back of each unit. Switching from a single 200 to a pair of 400s not only doubles the power it also reduces the distortion by four times (THD+N 0,00025%) as well as doubles the number of inputs should a user require more that can be offered by a single unit.

Listening to Natalie Merchant and Christina Aguilera through the 400 monoblocks didn't really overwhelm me with anything that wasn't already present with a single stereo 200. Perhaps the music selection plays a large role in this determination. To test this I listened to Passacaglia, as well as many other albums throughout the entire review period. I could immediately feel the power of the 400 monoblocks when playing this track with its lack of dynamic range compression. This power simply isn't there with a single 200 stereo unit. Passacaglia, and all the other tracks on this album for that matter, really benefit from the 400 configuration. This is never more evident than when the music increases in complexity and dynamic range. For example, my favorite part of Passacaglia is about 4 minutes and 30 seconds into the track as the tension builds into a big crescendo at about 5:45. The Devialet 400 is able to reproduce the loud and delicate parts of this track with very good resolve where the 200 comes up a little bit short.

Conclusion

As I said in the opening paragraph, I set out to find if the Devialet products were really as good as the press would have us believe. Starting with the Devialet 200 stereo amplifier / DAC, I found a product that sounds very good, looks very good, and is truly capable of replacing tens of thousands of dollars worth of HiFi gear for \$9495. The sound quality of a single stereo unit can be as good or better than many of the industry's traditional behemoth systems. Users seeking an even better system

can add a slave unit for \$7995 and increase performance, lower distortion, and produce the power necessary to reproduce all types of music nicely. Use of new technology and excellent engineering has enabled Devialet to offer, at less than ten thousand dollars, an ADH amplifier, preamplifier, and a DAC in arguably the industry's most luxurious chassis. Music lovers seeking a system upgrade must consider Devialet for a partial or full replacement of a traditional HiFi system. Devialet is the real deal.



Product Information:

- Product - Devialet 200 Stereo and 400 Monoblocks
- Price - \$9,495 for the 200, \$7,995 for the second "slave" unit
- Product Page - [Link](#)

Where To Buy:

[The Audio Salon](#)



Associated Music:

- [Frequently Used Review Playlist \(PDF 32 KB\)](#) 
- [Frequently Used Review Playlist \(JPG 4.1 MB\)](#) 

Associated Equipment:

- Source: [Aurender W20](#), [Auralic Aries](#)
- DAC: [Berkeley Audio Design Alpha DAC RS](#), [Auralic Vega](#)
- D-to-D Converter: [Berkeley Audio Design Alpha USB](#)
- Amplifier: [Pass Labs XA160.5 Monoblocks](#)
- Loudspeakers: [TAD Labs CR1 Compact Reference](#)
- Remote Control Software: [JRemote](#), [Aurender iOS App](#), [Auralic Lightning DS](#)
- Remote Control Hardware: [iPhone 6+](#), [iPad \(3rd Generation\)](#)
- Network Attached Storage (NAS): [Synology DS1812+](#)

- Audio Cables: [Wire World Platinum Eclipse 7 Balanced Interconnects](#), [Wire World Platinum Eclipse 7 Speaker Cables](#), [Wire World Platinum Starlight 7 USB 2.0](#), [Wire World Platinum Starlight 7 Digital Cables](#),
- Power Cables: [ALO Audio AC6 Power Cables](#)
- Ethernet Cables: [AudioQuest Vodka Ethernet Cables throughout system](#)
- Network: [Cisco SG200-26 Switch](#), [Baaske MI-1005 Ethernet Isolator](#), [Apple AirPort Extreme](#), [PFSense Router / Firewall](#), [Cisco DPC3000 Docsis 3.0 cable modem](#), [Comcast Extreme 105 Mbps Internet Service](#)