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ACCUPHASE DP410

Successor to the popular DP400, the DP410 promises improved sound and, importantly, now offers USB input

The DP400 was the first ever Accuphase that I had listened to in my own setup. With the arrival of the DP410, I am interested to find out just what differentiates it from its forebear.

Review sample kindly supplied by [AudioAanZee](#)

Retail price 5300 euro



Luscious Luxury

Like the DP400, but even more so, the DP410 has a superbly polished and luxurious feel like about it. Everything fits together meticulously, the unit's enclosure is well-damped, the drawer opens and closes smoothly and near-silently and all buttons feel just right. The display is where opinions might differ, but I for one like the retro styling a lot. It reminds of McIntosh gear, but in a more refined way. Incidentally, the display is the first point where I noticed the DP410 to differ from the DP400: instead of FL, it now uses leds, and this greatly improves brightness and long-distance readability. I can still easily read it when seated 6,5 meters away. Also: LED is way more

durable, which means that the display won't deteriorate any time soon, more precisely, it might well last a lifetime. Another area in which the DP410 differentiates itself from its forebear, is in the enclosure. While seemingly similar, the DP410 is actually built using 3 separate parts, instead of the folded 1-piece cover of the DP400. what's more: the sidepanels are nicely shiny and heavy-looking, while the cover has a very nice matte finish. Cosmetically, obviously I'd choose the 410 over the 400.



Technical Matters

Technically, there are differences between the DP400 and DP410, but at least the disc loading systems seem identical: both open and close and read discs with the exact same speed. Operation also works exactly the same, which seems to indicate that the laser pickup assembly is also the same, which is a good thing because these newer transports thus far seem to be very reliable. Incidentally: Accuphase claims to have manufactured the transport themselves, which is both true and not true. True is that they made the disc loader mech (drawer assembly) themselves. No OEM parts there. They likely have also designed the servo and probably some other clever programming themselves. But the actual motor and laser assembly is an OEM Sony unit. That's not a bad thing, or even a practice isolated to Accuphase, as most CD players I have had used either Sony or Philips drives, or parts thereof. Even most of Teac's famous VRDS drives are part Sony. There are actually only a handful manufacturers of laser optics, and Sony is among the most reliable ones among them so why would one re-invent the wheel?

There are many things to be said about the way that the DAC is built, but I don't usually dwell on these matters because I care most about the listening experience. Suffice to say that the digital inputs are 24bit 192khz compatible and that the DP410 uses what they call MDS++, a multiple Delta Sigma topology. The DP410 uses 4 PCM1796 DAC chips in parallel, while the DP400 uses two PCM1796 DAC chips in parallel. Never mind. Such things say very little about the actual sound. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

The DP410 has XLR outputs but these are not truly balanced, as evidenced by having the same output level as the cinch outputs. True balanced circuitry is more difficult to manufacture and adds significantly to the cost. But in my (true balanced) system at least I find that balanced connections usually sound better. Amongst other things, I hear a bigger soundstage and a fuller tonality using balanced cables. But this is not always the case, for example with the DP410, where the cinch outputs sound more lively and dynamic than the XLR outputs.

Like the DP400, the DP410 has a preference for more open sounding cables. After experimenting with interlinks and powercables, I settled on a Furutech Alpha3 powercord and while more dynamic sound can be had using Cardas Quadlink interlink cables, I preferred using Transparent Ultra XL's.



Running In

When the DP410 entered my system, it had played only for 1 week. Still brand-new I'd say. After connecting it, I delved into a listening session and decided to leave it running for a bit longer. First I left it playing a CD on repeat for a few days, then connected a Sonos Connect for the remainder of the running in period. At the moment of writing this review, I have had the DP410 switched on (and either playing CD's or feeding it with music at its digital inputs) for 20 days. Is this enough? For some components it is, for others it isn't. In the case of the DP410, I have to say that I hear very little difference between day 1 and day 20: only the treble gained some airiness after a week or so, the DP410 sounding a little clouded/dark in the extreme treble. Either the player needs precious little burn in, or it needs a whopping amount of it. For reasons that I will outline below, I suspect the latter.



Getting Started

The DP410 has a direct, clean, pure and neutral sound. It doesn't thicken bass or rose-tint the midrange. But let me state upfront that it is not at all analytical. Some Chinese products that I reviewed recently have a synthetic quality over them, they cross all the t's and dot all the i's and can really sound very good, but are marred by unnatural timbre. The same was true for the very popular Sony XA50ES. Fantastic transport and nicely detailed sound - but with a synthetic quality. After having gone over this so often, I can't blame regular readers for starting to think that I actually prefer some congestion or colouration and must not like pure neutral sound, but this isn't so.

Accuphase has been quoted as over-priced Sony and I must admit that until I heard an Accuphase player in my own setup, I also believed that while the build quality is obviously superb, sound would likely not be all the way up there. Preconceptions and misjudgement I know now.

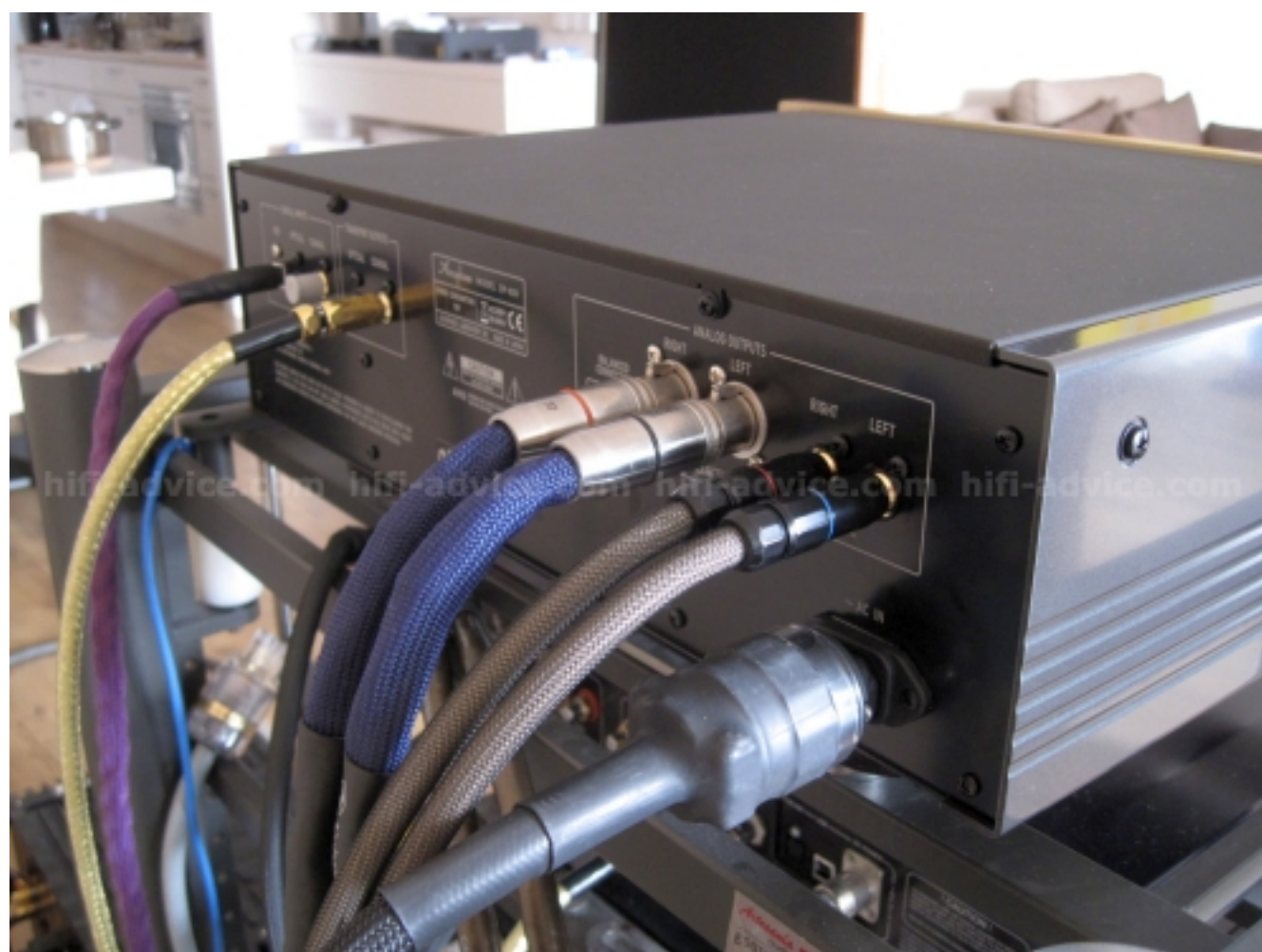
Accuphase may be a Japanese brand, but the products they build are miles away from Sony products. Artificial timbre? Synthetic sound? Strike-strike:

the Accuphase sounds utterly natural and there's no hint of artifice. See? A product can sound lean and tight without tipping over into a clinical or synthetic sound.



Listening - CD playback

As mentioned briefly above, the DP410 has a direct, clean, pure and neutral sound. Bass seems a little thin at first but it goes surprisingly deep when asked to. The bass is just not thickened but instead articulate and fast. Pace is spot on: not too fast and not too slow. Midrange is neutral and a little bit too clean/lean for my taste, but others might say that it just doesn't rose-tint the midrange. Treble on the other hand is really excellent - after a week at least. Before that, the DP410 sounded a little clouded, topped off in the extreme treble if you will. I was relieved to hear that this aspect improved as it is very important for me. So, after a week, treble is open, airy and precise, without glare or harshness - just the way I like it. Detail retrieval is excellent overall but it is in the soundstaging department where I feel that the DP410 comes up short. It does a fine job with focus but the stage is pretty confined to the speakers, not very deep, not very wide. The music doesn't really *flow* and that makes it a slightly technical experience for me after all. I don't feel emotionally engaged as much as I do when using other players. I talked about running in above and this is an area where I expect improvements after the player is fully run in. There's more on this further below in the DP400-DP410 comparisons section.



Listening - USB input

The USB input on the DP410 is as good as they come: using the

AudioAanZee Ultra Flow music server, the music sounds very, very similar to using the DP410 as an integrated CD player, to the point where it is hard to distinguish them. There are differences but they don't seem consistent so I think you can safely say that the DP410 sounds practically the same whether using it as a CD player or as a USB DAC, and this is high praise, as I can name several instances in which the USB input built into the CD player really let matters down compared to playing a CD.



Listening - as Transport

Here comes the interesting part: just out of curiosity I connected the

DP410's coaxial digital output to the [Rowland Aeris DAC](#). It did not just work, but it actually sounded terrific! The Aeris really brings out the best in the DP410 with a wider and deeper soundstage, more powerful bass, even more acoustically convincing mids and an overall more dynamic sound. Most importantly though, the music flows and I find that I am emotionally more engaged with the DP410 playing through the Aeris. Is this an honest comparison? I guess not, as the Aeris costs double the DP410 price. So yes, more money buys you better sound. No surprise there. The DP410 by itself though has silkier treble than via the Aeris.



My Levinson 37 transport is away for repairs and the 390S cd player is due for service so I cannot draw any direct comparisons, but judging from memory, the 37 and the DP410 are pretty close as a CD transport, perhaps the Levinson sounds a teeny bit smoother or fuller, but they're definitely in the same class. I find the DP410 as a transport to sound honest, pure, articulate, clean and dynamic, without tipping over into a sterile- or analytical sound. Consider that the 37 was a lot more expensive than the DP410 is, and is only a transport, and it is clear that this is the second part where the DP410 deserves high praise.



DAC Comparisons - PS Audio PWD MKII

I don't have any DACs at hand except for the Rowland Aeris but from memory I believe I can draw some overall conclusions.

Prior to the Aeris, the [PS Audio PWD MKII](#) was my USB DAC reference. But I would classify the DP410 as a lot better in most aspects. The DP410 sounds more fluid and airy in the treble, has higher resolution and cleaner bass, and importantly has no grain at all, where the PWD MKII can sound a bit coarse. The PWD MKII however beats the DP410 for soundstage expansiveness and layering but I strongly suspect hat the DP410 has more

to offer in this aspect after more prolonged running in.

Auralic Vega

Overall, I the DP410 and [Auralic Vega](#) have broadly similar presentation. Same level of bass articulation, midrange cleanness and overall transparency, but the Accuphase has the clear edge for its much more natural timbre. And after more running in, I think that the DP410 will also beat the Vega in the soundstaging department.



CD player comparisons - Meridian 506.24

I did briefly compared the DP410 to a Meridian 506.24. These players couldn't be more apart: where the Accuphase sounds clean, pure, open and dynamic, the Meridian sounds smooth, mellow and overly fat. While I always thoroughly enjoy the Meridian, especially with badly recorded CD's, I can't really appreciate it as much anymore after having listened to the DP410 for a while. The Meridian just doesn't cut it in the transparency, detail and dynamics departments. Yet, the music does *flow*. Where the DP410 can sound too controlled, the 506.24 just pours the music out of the speakers, into the room, and vocals and guitars seem more *melodic*.

Intrigued by this strange contradiction, I asked a friend to bring over his 2-year old DP400 for a one-on-one.



Strangely, the DP410 has a darker champagne colour than the DP400

DP400 vs DP410

Colds from the box (a 45 minute ride) the [DP400](#) was connected in place of the DP410. Same position on the rack, same powercable and same interlinks. Believe it or not: the first thing we noticed was how music via

the DP400 did in fact flow very nicely. With the DP400, we *did* feel emotionally engaged. But there was more going on: the DP400 sounded more relaxed overall. Bass was less articulate and less powerful, midrange was more rosy, more retracted in the soundstage and more relaxed overall, but also less articulate and less vibrant. Besides the midrange, the other biggest difference was in the soundstaging: where the DP410 was confined pretty much to the speakers, the DP400 spread noticeably wider and deeper and there was definitely more air between the instruments. Treble on both players is more or less the same.



Listen to the DP410 for a while and the DP400 sounds overly relaxed. Listen to the DP400 for a while and the DP410 sounds overly controlled. Which is the right perspective? Well, I can't imagine that Accuphase would voice these players so differently and really think that these players just need a hell of a lot more running in than is generally assumed. The DP400 has been in use for 2 years; the DP410 has only played a few weeks. So, if I get the chance, I will revisit the DP410 in a year's time or so, as I strongly believe that it will have even more to offer after having been in use for a prolonged period.



CONCLUSION

Fabulous build, smooth operation, pure luxuriousness. The DP410 operates like a dream and sonically threads a very fine path between cleanliness and musicality. It is as neutral a sound as they come, but without ever tipping over into an analytical or unforgiving sound, and importantly, with musical timbre fully intact. USB input with sound all the way up there tops it off, making for a CD player / DAC combo with an absolutely more than fair price considering what's offered.



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