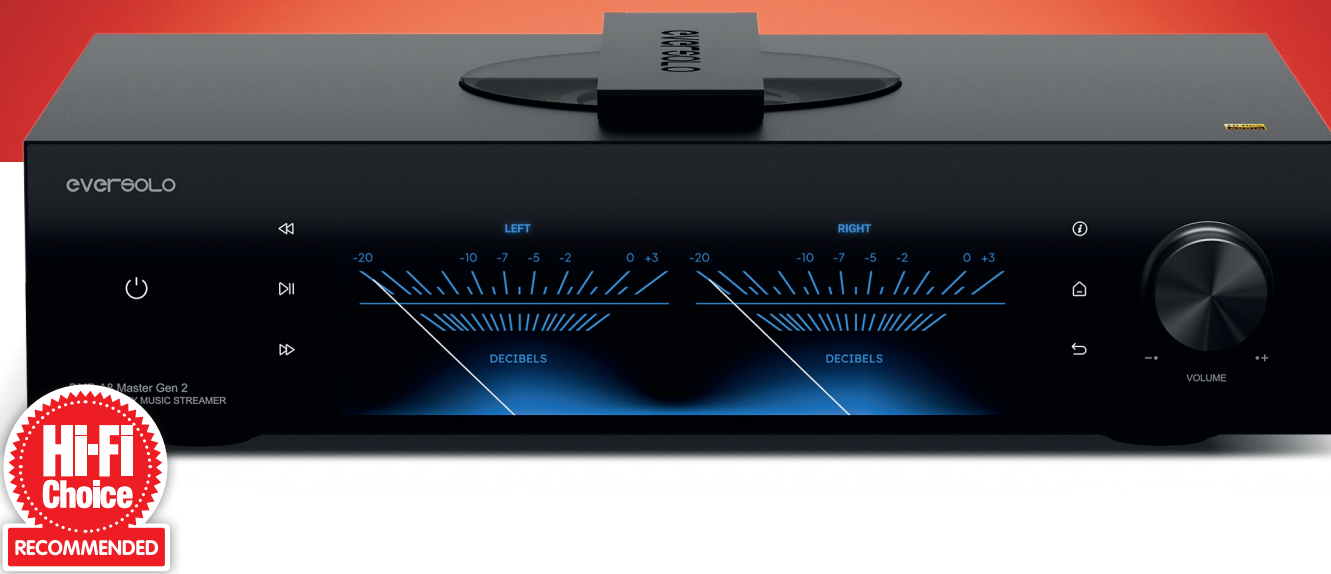




Discworld

The latest Eversolo streamer takes the brand in different directions. **Ed Selley** thinks they are rather good ones too

In the relatively short time it has been in the market, Eversolo has shown that it is perfectly happy to embrace unusual technical solutions should it feel the need. One of its most enduring has been the use of analogue preamp sections in its streamers; when the original DMP-A8 (HFC 513) launched in 2023, it took the – frankly brilliant – software underpinnings of the DMP-A6 (HFC 506) and added the scope to connect analogue sources to it as well. At the time, the idea felt a bit niche – you could reasonably argue that the simpler DMP-A6 worked as well for many users, but it was unquestionably impressive engineering.

Fast forward three years and Eversolo has used analogue preamps in enough other devices so that the A8 no longer feels like an odd outlier to the range. Now the company has decided to update the line to Gen 2 status and this has been applied to two models: the ‘standard’ A8 and the Master edition you see here. This does everything that the non-Master version does, with an interesting twist we’ll come to in due course.

Firstly, we need to cover the shared functionality and the A8 Master Gen 2 does have an awful lot. At its core, it supports PCM to 768kHz and DSD512,

handled by the pairing of the AKM AK4499EXEQ and AK4191EQ DAC. This can be accessed via network storage, USB drive or by popping up to 8TB of storage into the internal drive bay. Native streaming is supported by extensive streaming service support (notably inclusive of a native resolution access point to Apple Music) together with support for other major options. AirPlay is also included.

What initially seems like an impenetrable wall of sound quickly reveals its nuances

Digital inputs include USB, coaxial and optical supported by HDMI ARC/eARC together with decent Bluetooth implementation. There is a single XLR and RCA input in the ‘analogue section’. These are complemented by a healthy selection of outputs too. As well as the XLR and RCA outs, the Master edition can additionally send signals via optical, coaxial, AES, USB and i2S (which has the same eight selectable pin out modes offered by the T8). The Master Gen 2 also distinguishes itself through an upgraded clock architecture built around an OCXO and PLL, together

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Eversolo DMP-A8 Master Gen 2

ORIGIN
China

TYPE
Streaming preamp and CD player

WEIGHT
6kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
388 x 99 x 265mm

FEATURES
• Supports sample rates up to: 32-bit/768kHz PCM; DSD512
• Wired and wireless networking
• Inputs: XLR; RCA; USB-A; USB-B; coaxial; optical; 10MHz external clock; 12V trigger
• Outputs: RCA; XLR; USB-A; coaxial; optical; i2S

DISTRIBUTOR
Decent Audio

WEBSITE
eversolo.com
decentaudio.co.uk

with a 10MHz external master-clock input. In short, there are very few ways that you *can’t* get a signal out of the Eversolo.

At this point, though, we need to talk about the trifling detail that there is also a top-loading CD mechanism. This is not the first time Eversolo has included optical disc support with a product – the Play CD (HFC 532) also comes with a CD mechanism. Here, though, it’s a focal point of the design. The hardware is described as “custom” (Eversolo declines to explain which bits specifically are, however) and is a top loader complete with stabilising puck. It looks and feels beautifully engineered and is very confidence-inspiring to use. It also shares a party piece with the Play CD. When it looks at the table of contents, it will go online to find metadata and album art. This means that the gap between closing the lid and noise coming out is longer than some alternatives, but it looks fantastic.

This is because the cosmetic updates to the Gen 2 models are so well thought out. The larger display is simply gorgeous, combining size, contrast and sheer vividness in a way that makes most rivals feel a bit half hearted. There is a bewildering selection of choices as to what it can show as well – ranging from a few takes on art and metadata, to a fully animated log fire. The casework is flawlessly bolted together and, even though this is far from ‘cheap’, you can see where the money has gone. In combination with the excellent user interface, it all looks and feels special.

Sound quality

Sonically, the DMP-A8 Master Gen 2 doesn’t let the side down either. Such is the proficiency of modern digital

decoding, if you are looking for absolute night-and-day differences between the Gen 2 and original DMP-A8 (or even the DMP-A6 Gen 2), you are likely to be disappointed, but this reflects the sheer capability on offer. Give the Eversolo the layered and idiosyncratic *Speak For Yourself* by Imogen Heap, and the manner in which it handles opener *Headlock* is a demonstration of its capabilities. Heap is always the centre of attention, her lush, overlapping vocals are delivered in the middle of the soundstage with the electronic effects that underpin them radiating out. What can initially seem like an impenetrable wall of sound quickly reveals its nuances.

One feature that does help the updated DMP-A8 is the option to apply upsampling. I find some of the multiples it offers – turning a 44.1kHz signal into one that is no less than 705.6kHz – sound a bit forced and ‘hyper real’, but running a less pronounced ‘2x’ setting yields some

There’s a bewildering selection of choices as to what the display can show

useful benefits to fine detail and soundstage. It’s so simple to access and adjust that you find yourself using it routinely.

I also find myself revisiting CD, not simply out of a box-ticking obligation, but because the combination of immaculate user experience and the sonic prowess of the Eversolo make it a genuinely rewarding experience.



HOW IT COMPARES
Streamers with CD players built in are relatively rare, but Marantz boasts the SACD 30n and CD 50n (HFC 468 and 518), which the Eversolo sits between in price terms. The DMP-A8 Master Gen 2 cannot match the SACD capability of the 30n and the CD 50n has far better HDMI implementation, but from that point on the advantages sit with the Eversolo. It has a superior streaming interface, better connectivity (as both Marantz models are designed to partner amps, they don’t have analogue inputs) and their preamp functionality is more limited. If you need SACD, the SACD 30n might still have an edge but otherwise the Eversolo looks like the better option.



Perhaps the most surprising examples of this are the electronica compilations from the turn of the century from Global Underground, Fabric and the like. I have long since moved these discs to a massive wallet and to be reunited with the cover art and long-lost track lists makes them a more immersive experience even before the Eversolo’s huge technical prowess is considered.

Thanks to that analogue preamp, it’s not done there either. Connected to a Chord Electronics TToby power amp and with Vertere MG-1 MKII Magic Groove turntable and Cyrus Classic PHONO (HFC 423, 506 and 520 respectively) running into the XLR input, the effect is that of a wholly convincing analogue preamp. Bloc Party’s *Silent Alarm Live* fizzles with the energy of a band enjoying themselves in front of an audience in

raptures and the Eversolo does nothing to add or detract from both the innate joy of the recording and the means by which the turntable and phono stage recreates it. I genuinely don’t know how many people will take a device like this and use it as a complete front end, but it is more than capable of being employed this way should you wish to try it.

Conclusion

“More than capable” is a fine three word summary of the Eversolo. I confess that, when I saw it at the High End Show in Vienna, I wasn’t completely sure if Eversolo was on the right lines with it, but I’m far more enthused now having used it. The company has taken all the things it excels at and added a touch of flair, a dash of interactivity and, bluntly, a bit more fun to the premise of a network streamer. I am frustrated that AirPlay is absent and there are some detail tweaks that could be done to make the experience more user friendly still, but there’s no doubt this is an exceptional addition to Eversolo’s unique way of doing things ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL
★★★★★

LIKE: A pleasure to use across its considerable features; sounds great

DISLIKE: No AirPlay or Chromecast

WE SAY: A brilliant new arrival to the Eversolo lineup that integrates CD into a peerless streamer