



The Changing Pleasures of Music

Few developers make the global high-end community sit up and take notice as regularly as does Harmonix boss Kazuo Kiuchi. And his new DAP-999EX digital-to-analog converter will no doubt get the attention of his fellow engineers and designers as well.

Traditional Japanese equipment is designed to have a soothing, yet structured effect on the soul of their users. As music fans, we've had years to grasp and appreciate this effect, even when the nearest green meadow takes the shape of a public park for dogs whose only hills and vales are those structured by the spirit of the moles living beneath them. Kazuo Kiuchi has applied the Japanese teachings of such illuminative and stress-eliminating effects to the field of acoustics with his Harmonix accessories. And, he has long since implemented his arcane technologies for harmonizing resonance control into a number of devices, particularly the Reimyo DA converter and the Reimyo CDT-777 transport reviewed and highly praised in STEREO by my colleague Bode and myself respectively.

Now Kiuchi San has introduced a new converter – the DAP-999EX – whose appearance is designed to match the transport. At first glance the designation EX (for “extraordinary”) didn't seem to make much sense. The insides of the converter, accommodated on a printed circuit board, look almost identical to those of its predecessor. The passive Enacom filter is again located at the power input, the popular Burr-Brown converter chip once more marks the transition to the analog section, the power is supplied by two potent C-core transformers, and you'll find that as standard Harmonix has placed a highly audiophile type of fuse in the main fuse holder.

And what a refreshing little surprise it was when this new converter started playing music! The Can classic “She Brings the Rain” in the remastered recording from the original tapes on their Can Anthology started off with a guitar that played into

the poetry of this song with the kind of subtlety and feeling for rhythm that CD reproduction rarely succeeds in creating. The DAP-999EX made its debut with a full sound and a warmth of bass and rapturous richness of tone that played so unbelievably smooth that the listener was left with no doubt about the endless delight he will have as it presents music in its entirety even into its finest intricacies.

A DA Converter with an Analog Note

Other CDs simply confirmed the subtle way that the voices were gently warmed and in turn made modestly lighter in their uppermost regions. I sensed this perhaps slightly euphonic effect of this type of tuning almost always to be a sort of beguiling, primarily in acoustic settings where I experience the digital medium as being mostly too unemotional and mechanical. For the analog fans among you: The new Reimyo is as good as the best Koetsu cartridges when it comes to immersing you into the music with its natural sounds and own warmth – including a touch of euphony.

That this has absolutely nothing to do with superficial aesthetic sound is shown by the XRCD recording of “Masterpiece” by Mario Suzuki that master Kiuchi produced himself. I always felt that the stark title of this CD was almost kitschy when I played it on equipment of lesser quality. Yet when using his new converter, the musicians commit themselves to the sounds with such care, yes even devotion, that this romantic music becomes not only just beautiful, but reveals the genuine sentiment and spiritual depth all the way into the fingertips of the artists.

One of the secrets to this new converter's musical instinct appears to lie in JVC's K2 technology that is used in recording the XRCDs and whose latest generation can be found in the DAP-999EX's JVC processor chip. One learns very few specifics about how the K2 chip works except that it uses highly

complex software to handle all those digital problems. Clearly its advocates support the opposite philosophy of other manufacturers, such as Jadis and 47 Labs, who see simplification of how digital signals are processed as the ideal way to go.

Everything on one circuit board: With the latest K2 digital processor from JVC, the digital section has an extremely complex architecture



Phase switch: Besides all the needed connections there is also a phase switch on the back that is worth trying out when playing unfocused or undynamic CDs.



Better in Details than the Reference

That doesn't matter at all as far as the listener is concerned. If when listening to the "Jazz" track of my last year's favorite album "Leukocyte" by E.S.T. the cymbals delicately scatter fine pearls of

high notes throughout the room and the piano puts tonal differences on display in its ostinato near the end into which it is easy to lose oneself, then the Reimyo has truly gotten to the core of the music – and what could be more important than that?

THE TEST SYSTEM

CD TRANSPORT: Jadis JD-1 Pro Mk II, Reimyo CDT-777
DA CONVERTER: Jadis JS-1 Mk III
TURNTABLE: Brinkmann LaGrange/12.1 with Thales tonearm
PHONO CARTRIDGE: Brinkmann EMT ti, Transfiguration Orpheus
PREAMPLIFIER: Kondo KSL-M7 Phono
STEP-UP TRANSFORMER: Kondo KSL SFz
POWER AMPLIFIERS: 47 Labs Gaincard/Power Humpty 50, Gryphon Mono Reference
SPEAKERS: Audioplan Kontrast Mk V
CABLES: Harmonix, Aural Symphonics



What's that peeking out at you? An audiophile glass cartridge fuse (top) comes as standard equipment.

That STEREO's reference system, with its big and expensive Jadis converter, has more force in direct comparison, primarily in the lower regions, while the front imaging level seems to stretch somewhat more clearly and presents itself with more openness does no harm to the pure musical pleasure of the Reimyo. With it the strings often seemed somewhat fuller and richer. In the case of the live recording of Bruckner's 7th Symphony directed by Günter Wand, you could hear the way each sound developed on its own, which allowed you the marvelous experience of the formation of the entire musical structure. That the Jadis combination brings out the lower pizzicato of the strings somewhat more energetically and makes the horns a bit more self-conscious, even though they radiate through the Reimyo with these delightful tones of their own, is what accounts for the minor difference to the reference system.

The new Reimyo DAP-999EX converter is yet another genuine masterpiece from Kazuo Kiuchi which means: there is hardly a more beautiful way of "tending" one's pleasure garden of digital music.

Uwe Kirbach

REIMYO DAP-999EX

Price: about 8,900 euros
 Dimensions: 43x7x34 cm, Warranty: 2 years
 Distributor: Warren Quality Systems
 Tel: +49 (0)6732-936961, www.wqs-online.de

Reimyo's DAP-999EX is an eminent musical converter whose overwhelming strengths can be found where lesser ones mostly falter: in the finest possible portrayal of structures, rhythms and colors, in the entirely self-assured depiction of the music. Probably the most economical way of listening to CDs today without any artificial aftertaste.

LABORATORY

Kazuo Kiuchi already predicted that we would be unable to gauge the technical quality of his new DAC using traditional measuring methods. Actually, the only difficulty we had was in measuring the problems of aliasing distortion. Apparently the K2 signal processing led to higher values for which there are no tonal equivalents. The distortion factor at 0.5 percent (400 Hz / -60 dB) is in fact very low, considering that a converter nonlinearity of 0.5 decibels (to -90 dB) is considered to be low. The signal/noise ratios are extremely high at 114/98 dB (digital zero). The output resistance was 146 ohms; the no-load power consumption was 13 watts.

EQUIPMENT

In addition to digital XLR and cinch inputs, there are also a BNC and an optical Toslink connection. The only thing missing is that less and less common optical ST-ST connection. Balanced and unbalanced outputs. The permanently installed Harmonix tuning feet are a real delight as is the new Harmonix X-DC2 power cable (an 800 euro value) that comes with it

STEREO-TEST

SOUND RATING **96%**

VALUE FOR THE MONEY



VERY GOOD