

# T+A MP 200

The final, or should that be first, component in T+A's 200 series quartet is a CD-playing, network-attached media transport that boasts a proprietary 'SYS-Link' connection  
 Review: **Jamie Biesemans** Lab: **Paul Miller**

After delighting headphone lovers with the HA 200 DAC/amp [HFN Aug '20], which nicely matched the Solitaire P headphones introduced at the same time, T+A has been on a roll. The HA 200 transpired to be just the first in a range of units forming the new 200 series – all compact separates, but all designed to dovetail seamlessly together. To flesh out the range, the German company introduced a standalone DAC and two choices when it comes to amplification – the stereo A 200 [HFN May '22] or monoblock M 200, both based on Purifi's Class D Eigentakt modules [see PM's boxout, p71]. So it didn't take a genius to see what was missing: a source component. Enter the MP 200.

**DIGITAL ALL THE WAY**

Priced £4400, this networked CD spinner is sleek and almost desktop-friendly in its dimensions, but also quite specialised – it's a pure transport, possessing only digital outputs. This is in line with the company's belief that fidelity increases by keeping functions such as streaming apart from D/A conversion. Yes, T+A does sell the all-in-one Caruso components [HFN Jul '21], but the 200 series is not meant to be a 'lifestyle' product. Instead it's positioned as a compact alternative to its more traditionally-styled R and E ranges.

Being a digital-only player makes it the must-have complement to T+A's DAC 200 [HFN May '22], and vice-versa. It's hard to imagine buying one without the other, although there's no reason why you couldn't combine the MP 200 with an outboard DAC from another brand. Standard coax/optical digital outputs are provided for this very purpose [see p73].

Indeed, there are good reasons why you might consider the T+A player as an addition to an existing system, starting

**RIGHT:** Slot-loading CD-ROM transport [top left], Bluetooth module [bottom, centre] and NXP LPC2478 microcontroller-based mainboard [right] are all powered via a 5V/10A switchmode PSU [in cage, lower left]

with its broader than usual feature set. Even though there are enough other digital transports packed with streaming options available, few also offer an integrated disc spinner next to a radio tuner. Alongside wired/wireless networking, the MP 200 also allows you to lace up other sources via coax (192kHz) and optical (96kHz), or add an external HDD via its USB-A port. All this explains why T+A labels the device a 'Multi Source Player', not a mere digital transport.

**PART AND PARCEL**

Of course, the main reason to combine the MP 200 with the DAC 200, and then add either the A 200 amplifier or M 200 monoblocks, is that the range fits nicely together aesthetically and technically – the combination of both being what the German brand is all about.

The MP 200 is immediately recognisable as a part of the 200 series, sharing the same industrial design – which in turn harks back to T+A's MiDi range. As digital transports go it's a hefty unit, weighing in at 4.4kg, courtesy of its substantial alloy chassis with fine chamfers to add some sophistication. The front panel takes its cues from the DAC 200, sharing the same OLED display flanked by a large volume knob and a row of input buttons. But where the DAC 200 brandishes some eye-catching VU meters, the MP 200 has a barely noticeable slot for the CD mechanism. There's very little further embellishment, making for a solid, streamlined look.

Showing off its engineering chops, T+A seems quite proud that the streaming module inside the MP 200 was developed in-house and not sourced from, say, Stream



**ABOVE:** Volume/menu rotary, and slot-loading CD transport, are joined by input select buttons under the cool, clear display. Setup/operation is also fully covered by T+A's MusicNavigator app

Unlimited. It's well stocked too. Next to the options embedded in the MusicNavigator app, the MP 200 is Roon Ready, accepts DLNA streams, and implements Bluetooth with the higher quality aptX codec. AirPlay and Chromecast are missing, but T+A's app is a user-friendly experience and has plenty of options. One thing I particularly like is the ability during setup to deselect unwanted sources, keeping the app's interface clutter-free.

the MusicNavigator app, your smartphone or tablet offers an even greater scope of control, such as selecting one of the six digital filters on the non-networked DAC. It's all very seamless.

*It proves that silver CDs still cut it as a hi-fi source'*

Combine the MP 200 with other 200 series units, and it really feels like you are controlling a single device instead of a collection of separates. The SYS-Link also functions as a high-quality transport for the audio stream [see PM's Lab Report, p73], so this one connection plays a dual role in coupling the MP 200 to its fellow 200 series brethren – smart thinking!

**SYSTEM LINK**

In addition to being a digital source, the MP 200 can also act as the control centre for the whole 200 series ecosystem. Through its proprietary SYS-Link connection (essentially an Ethernet cable) on its rear, it can marshal any T+A 200 series component that's 'next in line'. This integration goes a lot further than the usual volume control, as the transport's metal-finished remote [p73] will also switch inputs on the DAC 200, for example – even the latter's optional HDMI board, if you've shelled out for it. Furthermore, when using

**NORTHERN EXPOSURE**

Fitting the MP 200 into a larger 200 series system featuring the DAC 200, A 200 and Focal Sopra N°2 floorstanders [HFN Sep '15], setup and configuration couldn't be easier. And with the *Inni* album from Icelandic rock band Sigur Rós [Krúnk KRUNK7DVD] in the CD drive, T+A's transport immediately showed it had the temperament to

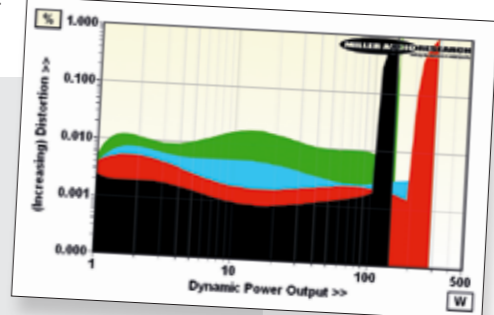
convey this atmospheric live recording. It's distilled from two days of concerts at Alexandra Palace way back in November 2008, and the songs from this stage in Sigur Rós's career present as very airy and dreamlike, a character which the MP 200 – together with the other T+A components – certainly delivered. Singer Jónsi showing off his high vocal range – there's nothing quite like it – on 'Glósóli' was particularly impressive, with the MP 200 revealing its capacity to combine clarity and texture.

**WALL OF SOUND**

Other tracks including 'Ny Batterí' and 'Svefn-g-englar' can't be categorised as easy listening, considering the lyrics are in a mix of Icelandic and the made-up language Hopelandic. But that doesn't seem to matter once you get the chance to experience the scale and depth of these works – something the MP 200 deftly enables, even when the band creates a massive distorted guitar-driven wall of sound at the end of *Inni*'s opening track.

Proving that a plain vanilla CD can more than cut it as a hi-fi source if played through a capable system, the performance here was commendable, no doubt helped by the healthy dose of power delivered by Purifi's Class D Eigentakt module in the A 200. It's also a boon that controlling CD playback on the MP 200 is just as easy via the remote handset as through the app.

Staying in the northern hemisphere, 'Lokk' from Norway's Erlend Anneseth Trio



**POWERFUL PARTNER**

The A 200 power amp [HFN May '22] and HA 200 headphone amp [HFN Aug '20] join the MP 200 and DAC 200 in T+A's compact quartet. The former rounds off a very capable three-box system [as auditioned by Jamie, above]. The A 200 is a Class D design, rated at 125W/8ohm, and utilises the Purifi Eigentakt technology first seen in NAD's M33 and C 298 models [HFN Aug '20 & Oct '21]. In practice the A 200 delivers closer to 145W/8ohm and 285W/4ohm with an almost identical 146W, 289W, 290W and 152W into 8, 4, 2 and 1ohm loads, respectively, under dynamic conditions [see inset Graph]. And, just like NAD amplifiers of old with their 'soft clipping' circuit, this T+A amp has been engineered to 'soften' the blow near clipping with a progressive rather than abrupt increase in THD at maximum output. Furthermore, and in common with other 'Eigentakt adoptees', T+A's amp also delivers the load-independent ±0.15dB/20Hz-20kHz frequency response and wide 88.4dB A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW) that sets it apart from legacy Class D designs. PM

## NETWORKED CD TRANSPORT



**ABOVE:** The MP 200 hosts BT, WLAN and FM radio antennas with hardwired LAN, coaxial (2x) and optical digital inputs alongside USB-A for external HDDs. Outputs are on coaxial RCA (S/PDIF) and proprietary SYS Out (RJ45)/USB SYS connections

[Hubro, 48kHz/24-bit download] marries traditional hardingfele fiddle-playing with thick layers of beats, streamed here via Roon. Reminiscent of electronic artist Four Tet, 'Impedans' was an intriguing listen, its flighty, repetitive melodies nimbly presented by the T+A player, pulling me into the performance.

Once there, the MP 200's detailed nature let me discover there's a lot more going on in the track than it would initially seem. Indeed, the hardingfele might look like a typical violin, but it's pretty eccentric when it comes to possible tunings (there are about 20 in use, including one called 'troll tuning'), and in the hands of Apneseth it becomes an incredibly versatile instrument. I enjoyed how the T+A system exposed the full texture of the string playing, be it delicately plucked or caressed with a bow.

### SWEPT AWAY

Modest as the compact MP 200 and other Series 200 units may present themselves, they're also up for sweeping orchestrations, as proved by Beethoven's Symphony No 9 performed by the Berliner Philharmoniker and conducted by Kirill Petrenko [Berliner Philharmoniker Recordings; 96kHz/24-bit]. Playing the Qobuz-sourced ALAC files from a USB SSD plugged into the MP 200's front USB port, and quickly



**LEFT:** Abbreviated legends on T+A's FM200 system remote cater for input selection, volume and menu navigation

selected via the MusicNavigator app, the player made getting drawn into this grand recording easy. The system appeared to shift gears effortlessly, both during the stately first movement and when transitioning to the exciting 'Molto vivace presto', where it gently pushed the timpanis to the front to shake things up a bit.

That light touch, exposing the finest detail without overdoing it, is where T+A's hardware typically excels. The flutes and glockenspiel got to play their distinct, youthful role in John Williams' 'Rey's Theme' [Star Wars: The Force Awakens OST, Walt Disney D002177202; 96kHz/24-bit], for example. But when the horns joined in, adding an epic dimension to the piece, this trio of 200 series components rose eagerly to the challenge.

As a final comment, I noted that tracking down music via Qobuz in the MusicNavigator app was a simple task. Often there are reservations to be had when a hi-fi company mentions it has developed its own software, but in this case the user experience is as excellent and stable as the sound is compelling. ☺

### HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

The Multi Source Player moniker is definitely well chosen, as T+A's MP 200 marries excellent streaming capabilities to a capable CD transport and even analogue, DAB+ and Internet radio. A smart, compact unit, it would be a great complement to any DAC, but combine it with its 200 series stablemates and you end up with an incredible music system that'll challenge many larger-format competitors.

Sound Quality: 84%

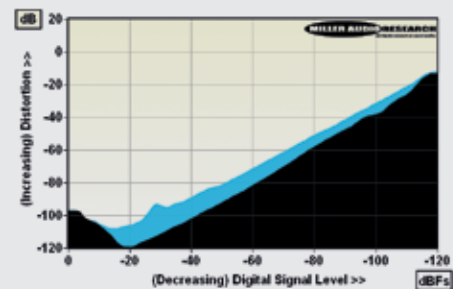


### T+A MP 200/DAC 200

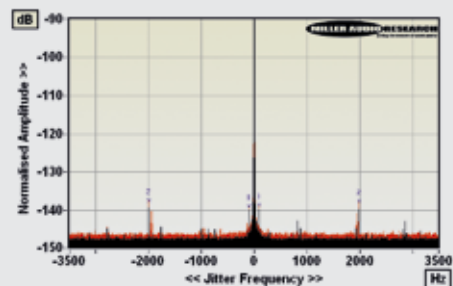
While the MP 200 remains the focus of our review it is, arguably, best auditioned/tested with T+A's partnering DAC 200 to which it brings both CD-playing and wired/wireless network audio functionality. The duo is reinforced by T+A's proprietary 'SYS Out/In' connection, maintaining both audio data *and* independent clock feeds between the digital source and sink (over RJ45 and USB). Looking for differences with the DAC 200 tested direct via S/PDIF or USB [HFN May '22] versus the same inputs routed via the MP 200 and the SYS link, means first looking in the *right* places...

So, the maximum unclipped 15.2V output ('-02' on the volume display) is unchanged, as is the 0.0029% peak level distortion, the latter impressively consistent with frequency at 0dBfs. The trend of THD versus level is unchanged too, reaching a minimum of ~0.0001%/1kHz and ~0.0004/20kHz at -20dBfs [see Graph 1]. T+A's six digital filter options also remain untouched – the traditional linear-phase FIR Long and Short trading treble extension and stopband rejection (-0.1dB vs -3.6dB/20kHz and 102dB vs. just 7.5dB, respectively) for much reduced ringing in the latter, Short, filter. The Bezier and 'NOS' filters trade poor-to-zero stopband rejection, phase distortion and greatly reduced time domain/ringing distortions, but all are better experimented with using higher sample rate material.

What else? Low-level linearity holds good to within ±0.2dB over a full 110dB dynamic range while jitter is fully suppressed to ~6psec across all inputs and sample rates. This marks a very slight improvement over the 'raw' DAC 200 which achieves ~10psec, the MP 200/DAC 200 combo showing a similarly minute reduction in random noise-like jitter [see Graph 2] and A-wtd S/N ratio – 116.8dB vs. 116.1dB (balanced). **PM**



**ABOVE:** Distortion vs. 48kHz/24-bit digital signal level from DAC 200 via 'SYS/USB' (1kHz, black; 20kHz, blue)



**ABOVE:** High resolution 48kHz/24-bit jitter spectrum from DAC 200 via USB (red) and 'SYS-Link' (black)

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Maximum output level / Impedance	15.2Vrms / 23ohm
A-wtd S/N ratio	116.8dB
Distortion (1kHz, 0dBfs/-30dBfs)	0.00285% / 0.0003%
Distortion & Noise (20kHz, 0dBfs/-30dBfs)	0.00285% / 0.0032%
Freq. resp. (20Hz-20kHz/45kHz/90kHz)	+0.0 to -0.1dB/-1.0dB/-3.8dB
Digital jitter (48kHz / 96kHz)	6psec / 6psec
Resolution (re. -100dBfs / -110dBfs)	±0.1dB / ±0.2dB
Power consumption (MP 200)	3W (1W standby)
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight (MP 200)	340x100x320mm / 4.4kg