

## HRT Music Streamer II

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### HRT Music Streamer II. \$299

It was only last September that I reviewed the first [Music Streamer products](#). It shows how quickly moving and competitive the computer DAC (digital-to-analog convertor) market has become that the mark two version are out already.

The Music Streamer II looks similar to the first version, with a USB port in one end and two audio sockets on the other. It's designed solely to be used with a computer – there are no inputs for a CD or DVD player.



### Powered from USB

What sets the Music Streamer range apart from most of their competition is the matter of power. Most competing DACs include a power socket and an accompanying ugly wall wart.

The Music Streamer range is powered entirely from the USB bus of your computer, requiring no other power sources. HRT say that the power supply is completely regenerated inside the Music Streamer devices “using a sophisticated set of proprietary circuits”.

The big wiz with the second version of the Music Streamers is asynchronous data transfer. Say what? With USB data transfers it's normally the computer that controls the sending of data. With an asynchronous USB DAC, it's the DAC that controls the flow of data. This, in theory, lowers data jitter and is thought, by people much more clever than I, to be A Good Thing.

Asynchronous data transfer is but one of many aspects of creating a good sounding DAC and I fear it may be grabbed by the gullible as being a sign of goodness. It's not as simple as that. For example, the Music Streamer II doesn't sound as good overall as the older Music Streamer +, which lacks this new feature.

### **Streamed...**

The original Music Streamer was slightly warm and tapered in the higher frequencies. All the better, perhaps, to deal with some of those nasty sounding low bitrate MP3s. The MS2 does away with this, giving the listener a better balanced, more extended sound. Of course, this means that nasty music rips will sound nasty.

Tonally the MS2 is a touch light, without the heft and body that bigger, more expensive products can achieve. “Focus” is a word that kept coming to mind, both in terms of the excellent sharp, lateral stereo and the ability to hear into the recording.

One area where the MS2 easily surpasses the previous model is in the bass. There's an incredible precision and focus to bass sounds. For example, while listening to a 1969 iTunes playlist, it was easy to hear the differences in bass guitar tone between the Wrecking Crew musicians (the conglomeration of top Los Angeles session musos), McCartney's Rickenbacker on a Beatles track, and that Peter, Paul and Mary's *Leaving On A Jet Plane* has both an electric bass and an upright underpinning the song. Excellent stuff!

And all this for \$299? The Music Streamer II offers amazing sound for a \$299 unit. Highly recommended.

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