

## dCS Rossini Player & Master Clock Review



The last few months well in fact this whole year so far has been a very busy time and not in the HiFi part of my life, but in my day to day life. With the birth of my son in February and then a house move in May, I have not had much time to listen to music, therefore reviews have taken a back seat for a little while. With us now settled in but many sleepless nights due to a 4-month-old baby to contend with I am slowly getting back to some kind of normality and am finally managing to squeeze in some good HiFi. With a bigger room the Wilson Audio Yvette's have more room to breathe and are sounding better than ever so I thought it was time to look for some new kit to review and what falls into my lap is the mighty dCS Rossini Player.



I have reviewed the dCS Debussy DAC previously and have had plenty of time listening to their top of the line Vivaldi DAC/Player at shows and privately at events including dCS's very own facility in Cambridgeshire, which I have to say is one of the best sounding rooms I have been in and heard. The Rossini sits somewhere in the middle of their range and takes their familiar but proprietary Ring-DAC technology and augments it into a very attractive one box chassis. An outboard Master Clock is also available to boost performance even further and that is the combination I have here for review purposes.

## Features and Build Quality

The Rossini is not just a normal DAC and CD player instead you can think of it as your digital hub, it acts as a fully functioning Network player and is Roon enabled so that it can seamlessly interact with and stream your music in all the major formats and only recently has had a software upgrade to include MQA. dCS DAC's and Players are built to last and when new features become available instead of hardware changes dCS can write their own specific software and code to upgrade your equipment and it also gives them a good performance boost. That is the beauty of investing in products like the Rossini as they can be updated to latest specs with just a standard firmware upgrade. The build quality as can be expected on an item this expensive is just



flawless and built like a tank but with a certain beauty that the player seems to exude in abundance. There is also an App for iOS products so that the player and all of its functions can be controlled via your smartphone or iPad and I just love the control that you can have over the dCS Rossini with so many different filters and adjustments that you can tailor the sound to just how you would like it. It's a beast of a player with me only scratching the surface of what this player is able to achieve. The CD drawer, for example, is just amazing with the way it is designed and built having for what I presume are steel rods that reinforce the strength of it but with a finesse with the way it ejects discs and closes, this may not seem like a revelation to many but to me it just goes to show how much thought and over-engineering has gone into this player's design and ultimate goal which is to be the best at its respective price point. It has a plethora of digital inputs with Coax and optical S/PDIF and AES/EBU digital inputs as well as an Ethernet port. Two BNC inputs for the Master Clock with 44.1kHz and 48kHz respectively syncing everything up perfectly. RCA and XLR analogue outputs can be used with a volume control on the front of the player allowing for connection if you so please into power amps and using the dCS as the digital preamp.

With the latest Ring-DAC technology this proprietary analogue DAC board is in its fifth iteration in the Rossini, the same one as used in the flagship Vivaldi DAC. Both the analogue and digital boards feature dual transformers with their own multistage voltage regulation. dCS use high-speed FPGA (Field Programmable Gate Array) chips which are software updateable and can perform all the processing that the Rossini requires, which they refer to as their very latest Digital Processing Platform.

## Setting Up

Setting up is fairly straightforward by connecting 2 Transparent XLR cables to my McIntosh Labs MA8000 Integrated Amplifier. The Clock came with 2 x 75ohm BNC connectors which go from the Master Clock into inputs 1 & 2 of the Rossini, an Ethernet cable also gets connected from my router. With player settings being altered in the iOS App all that is left is just to make sure that the Clock is set correctly with Auto Wordclock being selected. As mentioned earlier there are a plethora of settings that can be altered and adjusted which can be done on the fly so that you get the sound that you require.



## Performance and Sound Quality

Playback of the Rossini is complemented with my equally impressive Wilson Audio Yvette Speakers which received an Editor's Choice award at the beginning of the Year and is the first product to receive this honour. They are powered by my reference Integrated Amplifier the McIntosh Labs MA8000 which is a stunning powerhouse and a fine match with the Wilson's. Cables used are all Transparent Cables including the power chords. Music for demoing is for all the different types of media that the Rossini can handle with Tidal used for streaming purposes and Roon is used for music on my NAS drives. CD playback is also being demoed.

I start by playing some familiar CD's and settle on playing Day Breaks by Norah Jones on Blue Note Records for my first bit of the review material. This is the sixth studio album from the American born singer-songwriter. Track Two - Tragedy and you immediately notice the great timing and rock-solid imaging with a beautifully cast soundstage. The various layers of instruments shine through but not once getting in the way of the wonderful vocals of Jones and her brilliant piano playing skills. The Rossini really does make you sit up and listen to the music as it takes a grasp of you with its sheer musicality. The player is perfectly poised and reacts swiftly to the full-bodied piano note changes. Track Seven - Day Breaks and album title is a beautifully written melody which has a seductive sound which captures the mood of the song with a percussive beat underpinning her great vocals. The sound appears to have great depth with a slight echo to Jones voice making my room sound cavernous in size. I have listened to this album many times on various CD players that I have owned and reviewed and this is the first time that this piece of music has sounded so epic through my speakers, the Rossini really does reveal more of the music as it was intended to. It replicates the studio recording perfectly.

Moving on and I have chosen to listen to the same recording which I own in two different formats, one which is in FLAC format on my NAS drive sampled at 24bit 192kHz and the other on CD to see how well the Rossini plays both. The artist is MEIKO and her album is Playing Favorites from Chesky Records 2018. This album features well-known material given the MEIKO touch with her own personal mark made on some of these familiar melodies. Recorded in a decommissioned church in Brooklyn New York city it is a beautifully put together album which has me hooked from the very first track which is sung perfectly and a fitting tribute to the late Dolores O'Riordan from The Cranberries title Zombie. It is a haunting rendition which has a more spatial almost 3-dimensional effect on the high-resolution recording when compared to the CD version of this track, the CD is

simply stunning too and the Rossini's resolving power is evident on both formats. Track Two - Stand by Me is one of the most famous recordings with such a memorable opening riff on the Double Bass, the soundstage and imaging on this track is just superlative with an almost wrap around effect and the closest to the real thing I have listened to in my room. It is like she is standing in my room singing this famous Ben E. King song, her vocals are incredible and sound so natural through the Rossini and it is hard to tell the difference from both formats they are both so good, with maybe the high-resolution version pipping the silver disc for outright resolution. Every track on this album sounds sublime and the Rossini really does retrieve every ounce of detail from each of the recordings whether it be on CD or FLAC via the network attached storage (NAS) drives. Having listened to this album from start to finish multiple times over it is apparent how good the Rossini is and it really has been an enlightening experience listening to it. It is easy to understand why most of the top manufacturers choose dCS when demoing their speakers or amplifiers as it is the pure reference when it comes to the playback of digital music.



My third album is by Doug Robinson Compilation Vol. 1 DYNAMIC on Blue Coast Records and this time on DSD64. The higher resolution really does capture more of the music with an even broader canvas than before being portrayed out in front of me and the soundstage. Track Two - Zagora sounds incredible with so much going on but yet so easy to follow. This is an amazing recording and a brilliant bit of music to listen to through the Rossini with every single ounce of music being drawn out from this DSD file. There is some serious depth and width to this recording with a thumping beat pumping out of my Yvette's, each instrument seems to be floating out from all sides and in front of me. Listening to this album is something else and clearly shows the ability of the dCS as it is such a musically involving digital source for music. Track Three - Wade in the Water is more of the same with some slight restraint compared to the Zegora track, although the trumpet and percussion instruments are spot on with so much detail retrieval going on from the Rossini player. This is a classy Jazz/Fusion sounding album which does not fail to impress and am glad I went for the DSD version as its sound is simply captivating and with Track 9 - Mo'Dunk/The Wipeout you can hear why with some fantastic drumming and music on such a large scale. If you have not heard this album then I ask you to grab a copy and if you love music especially Jazz/Fusion then this will certainly tick all the right boxes.

My fourth and final album is from the incredible 2L record label, this music label offers some of the most beautiful recordings from various genres but under the guidance of the very talented Morten Lindberg who's skill as a recording engineer has had him nominated for many Grammy awards, in various formats including multichannel and the very latest immersive audio technology like Auro3D and Dolby Atmos. Morten's 2L was one of the first labels to author MQA mastering on his releases and I own many of them. The album that I

am listening to is the latest from the Hoff Ensemble - Polarity in 24bit MQA 352.8kHz. This trio of musicians produce some wonderful music and getting to hear them through the dCS Rossini is something that will really do this great music justice.

Track 4 - Polarity is a beautiful composition with the piano having a striking realism which sounds so natural and the percussion has an airy but satisfying sound to it, with plenty of dynamic shifts which sound incredible through the Yvette's. The bass has many textures and layers which are revealed precisely and with plenty of conviction and attack. The Rossini manages to dig out every last bit of detail and musical nuances. Track 6 - Justice is one of my favourite pieces on this album with some fabulous percussion and beautifully arranged, you have a real sense of scale and perception into this recording. There is so much space around the instruments with the snapping drums but so articulate with great timing and an incredible piano composition by Jan Gunnar Hoff. The dCS manages to recreate their art that is the Hoff Ensemble and does not get in the way of the musically adept performances. As a group they just gel so well together and you cannot help but think you are listening to the live performance. Track 8 - Euphoria is a fast-paced track with some great imaging and a sense of scale which is captured beautifully through the Yvette's with the Rossini giving out a riveting sound. This MQA recording is simply sublime and through the dCS it is the best I have heard this album sound. I honestly feel that the Rossini is now one very serious digital powerhouse when it comes to musical ability. This is pure reference in every sense of the word.

#### Conclusion and Final Thoughts

Having now spent many weeks with the dCS Rossini and Master Clock in my system it has really made me appreciate CD playback but absolutely love the incredible musicality of the high-resolution music that I own, and cemented my belief that digital music especially higher-resolutions is most certainly here to stay, and with products like this you really do get to hear more of the music than ever before. Pair this exceptional performance with excellent ease of use and you have one of the best digital sources on the planet. Setting Up

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