

MISSION 770: THE STORY BEHIND THE CLASSIC SPEAKER

WHAT HI★FI?

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REVIEWED



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Omni is a bargain



Rega Fono MM:
fifth-gen model,
five-star verdict



Amazing new
Mini LED Sony

STUNNING MARANTZ

New all-in-one system is
a beautiful all-rounder



FUTURE
ISSUE 478

THE BEST MUSIC DOCUMENTARIES TO STREAM NOW

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STREAMERS

View online review
whf.cm/MelcoN10

Melco N10/2-S38

Streamer £9399



The N10/2-S38 is expensive, understated and hugely capable

Melco likes to call its N10/2 a 'Music Library', which is a pretty good description. Simply put, it is digital storage – 3.84TB worth of SSD (Solid State Drive) in the case of the N10/2-S38 we have on test here. That's enough for nearly 6000 CDs, though hi-res recordings will take up more space.

The N10/2 comes in two parts: the main unit and a separate outboard power supply. It is always a good idea to keep an electrically noisy circuit such as a power supply with large currents flowing through it away from more sensitive audio sections, purely for sound quality reasons.

The main unit is a simple, uncluttered affair with just four control buttons and a rather small display on the front. Melco has a dedicated app offering, but there is no problem using third party UPnP streaming app alternatives such as mConnect.

The N10/2 comes with both MinimServer and TweakyMedia server software, as well as SongKong that helps to organise the music database. Knowing just how important it is to get the right metadata tagged onto your music files, Melco has worked hard to ensure that every file is categorised as accurately as possible, with specific treatments for the requirements of different types of music.

File compatibility is excellent, with the Melco able to handle PCM files up to 32-bit/384kHz and DSD 512; that should more than cover most people's music collections. We found the player switches between formats swiftly and seamlessly.

Wi-fi is off the menu, so the N10/2 has to be hard-wired with an ethernet cable. This makes perfect sense when it comes to network stability. Beyond that, there are three USB 2.0 Type A sockets to connect additional storage devices so you can back-up your music collection.

The Melco is a small unit, understated but visually elegant in its simplicity.

WHAT HI-FI?

There is no wi-fi, so the unit must be hard wired with an ethernet cable

WHAT HI-FI?

SOUND



BUILD



FEATURES



FOR

- Dynamic and authoritative sound
- Impressive detail and clarity
- Excellent build
- Built-in storage

AGAINST

- No built-in DAC
- Dedicated app could be more stable

VERDICT

The Melco N10/2 is an understated but hugely capable performer that is one of the finest digital sources we have heard



Overall build quality is excellent with the solid aluminium casework on both boxes finished to very high standards. Take a look inside and you will see that care has been taken to decouple any sensitive audio circuit from external vibrations.

SHARPLY ETCHED

We start by using the N10/2 as a music server feeding our reference Naim ND555/555 PS DR music streamer, and there is a sense of power and solidity that the same music files accessed from the Naim lack. As we listen to Tchaikovsky's *Marché Slave Op.31*, the presentation is sharply etched without being obtrusive, and as precise as we have heard. It's more open than we are used to, with greater space around the instruments. We are more aware of the orchestra's power and its dynamic reach. There is also a truer sense of the size and scale of the recording venue.



We add Chord's excellent Hugo TT2 DAC (£4995) to the N10/2 and the combination turns into one of the finest music streamers that we have heard. Whether taking hi-res files from its own hard drive or Naim's Uniti Core, this pairing delivers a combination of clarity and authority that's hard to better.

Nick Cave's *Carnage* set comes through with unusual boldness, the presentation rich with texture with low level details brushed up for inspection. There is so much information but it is organised in a way that encourages the listener to focus on the music rather than analyse the production or recording. We love the confident way this Melco/Chord combo paints Cave's distinctive tones and the surefooted manner with which it handles the album's mostly easy-going rhythms.

We listen to a wide range of music, from Bob Marley's evergreen *Legend* set to Radiohead's brilliant *In Rainbows* album, taking in the likes of Stevie Wonder, Bruce Springsteen and Mahler in between, and the N10/2 never misses a beat. Once set-up properly it works well and in a fuss free manner.

The Melco N10/2-S38 is expensive, and on paper doesn't look great value. But in use it's a charmer. If you are looking for a cutting-edge high-end digital source, this one deserves to be near the top of your list.

"The presentation is sharply etched without being obtrusive, and as precise as we have heard"