Stream-IF

Playback Designs Streaming Interface

True to our promise to our customers to always offer upgrade paths wherever possible for their existing Playback Designs products ("never leave a product behind"), we are now offering a new accessory interface that allows all our products to be upgraded with the latest features in digital streaming and file playback. Some of our Dream Series products already have the option to have these features built into them, but with the new external Stream-IF interface these same features can also be added externally to all other Playback Designs products.

For instance, the combination of the Dream DAC MPD-8 and this Stream-IF interface are a perfect and efficient package for customers who want to primarily stream their music from the internet and play files from local storage.

Concept

The concept behind the Stream-IF interface is to connect digital sources such as computers, servers, network attached storage and internet streaming services outside the sensitive DAC. It is well known that these digital sources carry a significant amount of digital and sometimes also mechanical noise, such as clock jitter, asynchronous clocks in power supplies and processors, vibration etc.

Connecting these sources to a separate box that is then connected to the DAC with a fiber optical link with a high bandwidth and low jitter specification results in the best possible separation between digital source and analog audio circuitry. This separation can result in a dramatic sonic improvement when compared to a direct connection to the DAC via for instance USB.

The first version of the PLINK interface was launched more than 15 years ago and supported DSD up to 5.6MHz. This version is called "Classic" and is implemented in the 5-series products and IPS-3 (that have not been upgraded yet). As technology never sits still DSD has been expanded to 11.2MHz several years ago. Accordingly we also expanded the PLINK format and called it "Sonoma" reminiscent of its origin in the professional recording tool for DSD (Sonoma workstation) that was developed by the founder of Playback Designs during the development of the SACD and DSD formats.

PLINK does not use the same media as TosLink, but it is based on a much higher

quality and lower jitter media that is used for very high bandwidth communication links where receivers require an extremely low jitter signal for reliable decoding. For PLINK we use a much lower bandwidth protocol than the specified limit of the media to further increase robustness against jitter.

Features

- new generation USB interface for PCM up to 384kHz and DSD up to 4x
- Built-in Stream-X module for:
  - direct connection to streaming services such as Tidal, Qobuz, Deezer and vTuner that can be controlled via an app on a tablet.
  - file playback from network attached storage via DLNA and UPnP (renderer and server function)
  - Roon end point ("roon-ready"). With this feature any attached DAC can be integrated into a Roon based server system.
- PLINK I/O compatible with Classic, Sonoma and Dream Series products
- Newest generation PDFAS clocking technology for ultra low jitter performance
- Connection to 5- and Dream series products via fiber optical PLINK for optimal separation between digital source and analog output stage of DAC.
- Connection to 3-series products via Coax
- USB connection supports recording via Sonoma Recorder software on Windows computer
- Firmware can be updated by end user