

Wadia 151PowerDAC mini

Wadia is the maker of one of my favorite products of the past few years: the 170iTransport, the only digital iPod dock. It was clearly a success for them, as the 151PowerDAC mini was designed to match up with the 170, with a nearly identical form factor. Unlike the other products here, the 151 is an integrated amp, not just a DAC. The 25 watts per channel (into 8 ohms) may not sound like much, but as long as you're not looking to blast out the windows, it's more than enough.

To minimize jitter, the 151 uses asynchronous upsampling. What this means is that it plots where each sample should be, using Spline curve interpolation. If a sample shows up slightly ahead or behind, the DAC in the 151 will rebuild it, then upsample it to 384 kHz (from 44.1). To do this, it has what Wadia refers to as a "very accurate" oscillator to control the master clock. This is a scaled down version of what Wadia uses in its über-expensive DACs/CD players.

It's not a word you'd usually use to describe an audio product, but the 151 is just adorable. It's tiny, only 8 inches on a side, yet has 50 watts and a pretty crazy DAC. Putting the 170 on top makes for a cute little system that looks even cooler driving big honking tower speakers. The remote will also control the 170 and is much nicer looking than the little one that comes with the 170.



Sound quality is outstanding—a smooth, inviting sound that absolutely makes all but the lowest-rez MP3s sound better. It's digital audio cleaned up and sounding oh so analog.

The 151PowerDAC could be used as the integrated amp in a small, desktop-style audio system, but even with just 25 watts per channel, you'd be surprised how loud you can get most speakers. When you consider the fantastic DAC and diminutive form factor, the 151 could easily be the basis for a superb, stealthy stereo setup.

PRICE: \$1,195

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