

Streaming Krell

FRESH FROM THE SOLDER BATH, MARTIN COLLOMS GETS TO TRY KRELL'S CONNECT – THE COMPANY'S FIRST STREAMER/DAC



With only days to spare, this latest Krell design made it onto this issue's review test bench. Up to now the only available version of this streamer had a digital S/PDIF output, but we felt strongly that the 'full cream' £3,500 version, equipped with a 32-bit DAC (and on-board remote volume control) was worth waiting for.

Here is a handsome full size, standalone, high resolution stereo audio source with single-ended and balanced outputs. It also has S/PDIF digital audio outputs to operate with other products. It operates with network-controlled audio data, provided either *via* a convenient 'wireless' radio-linked connection to the wireless router using the accessory aerial, or the usual CAT 5/6-wired Ethernet cable connection, running back to a server and associated NAS drive storage, for optimum quality and stability.

In our case this section is based on a Naim *UnitiServe* CD ripper/drive while hi-res and other material is located on a net-connected QNAP *TS459* drive. A USB memory stick socket on the back of the *Connect* also allows ready replay of such music files, interacting with the front panel display (or app) for navigation. Here file handling is limited to an alphabetic ordering of file/track names.

The unit is beautifully presented in a full width case, with a brushed anodised aluminium and neatly slotted satin black cover. A heavy duty, hewn-from-alloy-billet fascia is decorated by a satin silver central panel with a blue light. To the right a colour display window has nicely restrained illumination and contrast, providing clear operational and track information, interacting with the comprehensive alloy infra-red-linked remote control handset (which has rather small lettering and symbols). The display may be switched off entirely or set at two levels of

brightness. Four display themes may be selected and it may also be set to dim out after a selected interval. The only front panel control is for power, while mains input is *via* a normal IEC detachable cable.

Both *iPad* and Android 'Connect' apps are free on the web and were downloaded without fuss. Twonky Media is also regarded as an effective operating system for the NAS. Once the set-up commands had been entered *via* the remote control, working with the display, the *Connect* was ready for action, and the app comfortably and quickly mapped all the files and was ready for replay in all formats.

The handset and the app have volume commands including a user-set maximum, so if other sources are not required the *Connect* may be directly connected to a power amplifier for maximum sound quality and optimum dynamic range.

The handset has track select and navigation buttons and the former also selects stations in internet radio mode. Clear set-up instructions are given for first connection to the network, but setting up the alternative wireless network is little slower, as the alphanumeric menu on the remote needs step-by-step commands to enter the required Wi-Fi network encryption key. Internet radio handling is versatile, with useful commands and podcast access, plus the presetting of favourite stations.

This player can operate all round the world, but the five year warranty is only valid for the region where it was sold and for which the local mains voltage was set. Operating software upgrades are easily accomplished by pressing the required menu button: it will dial Krell, check the upgrade situation and download automatically, provided that the network has the usual protected internet access. Several *Connects* may be put on the same network under unified control to deliver multiple music sources for different listener zones from the same network.

Basic specifications include 2V unbalanced and 4V balanced outputs at 100ohms output impedance, 0.002% maximum distortion across a 20Hz – 20kHz frequency range, plus a 96dBA weighted signal-to-noise ratio. Standby power is a low 3W, increasing to 32W when operational. It also has RC5-linked remote connectivity, for example to a pre-amp, plus