

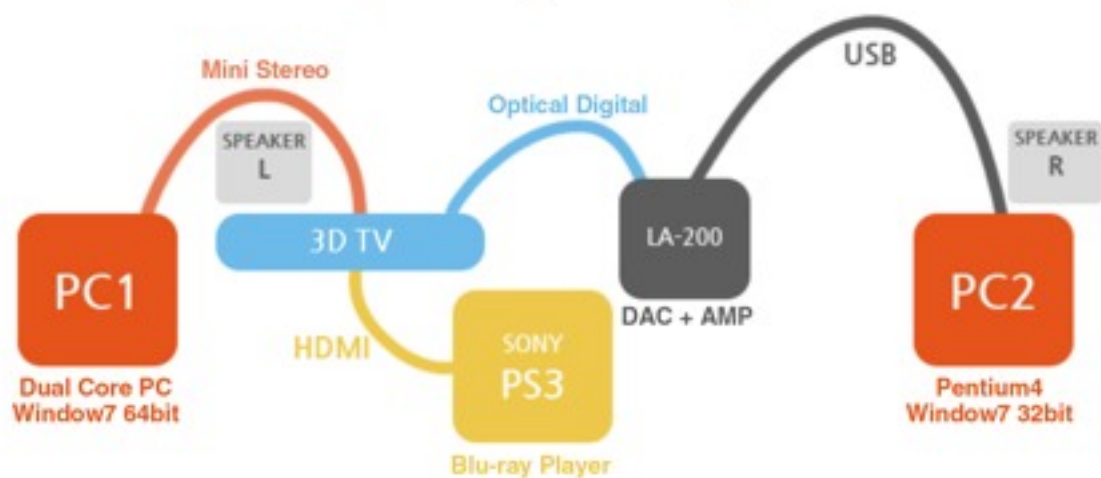
LEAD AUDIO FULL DIGITAL USB DAB AMP DAC AMP LA-200 Review 2 + AUDIO VECTOR KI-1 STANDARD

Opening the Pandora's box made by Søren

This is where I work, watch movie and listen to music. With the same composition as in the photo, I connected LA-200 and Ki-1 speaker and experienced the uses and their performance.



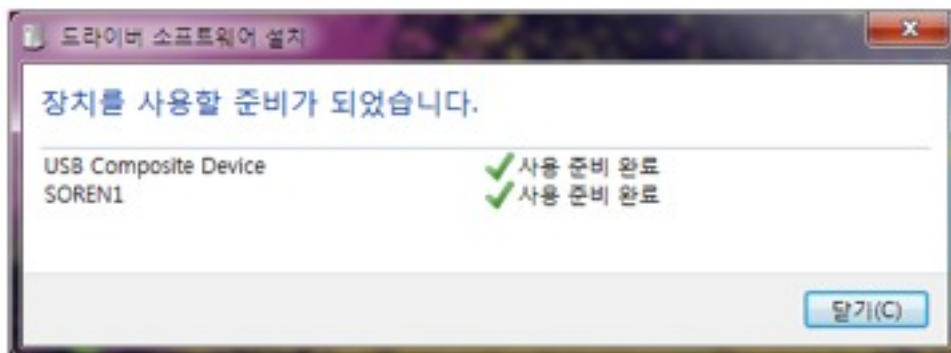
Desk Multimedia System Composition using LEAD AUDIO LA-200



<http://y2kelvin.blog.me>

Even though it may appear a little complicated, the actual connection is very simple. I originally planned to connect the main Computer PC1 and LA-200 with Coaxial cable, but it was too short. So I connected it to 3DTV instead. In this case, the 3DTV and LA-200 are connected by Optical cable, which allows the output of

speaker. I planned to use PC2 to play audio so I connected LA-200 with USB. (Just for the note, PC2 does not support Optical output. And PS3 is for watching movies and playing games. In this case, the digital audio can be transferred using HDMI so 3DTV is responsible for transmitting blue-ray movies and transmits amplification of digital audio of the game titles.



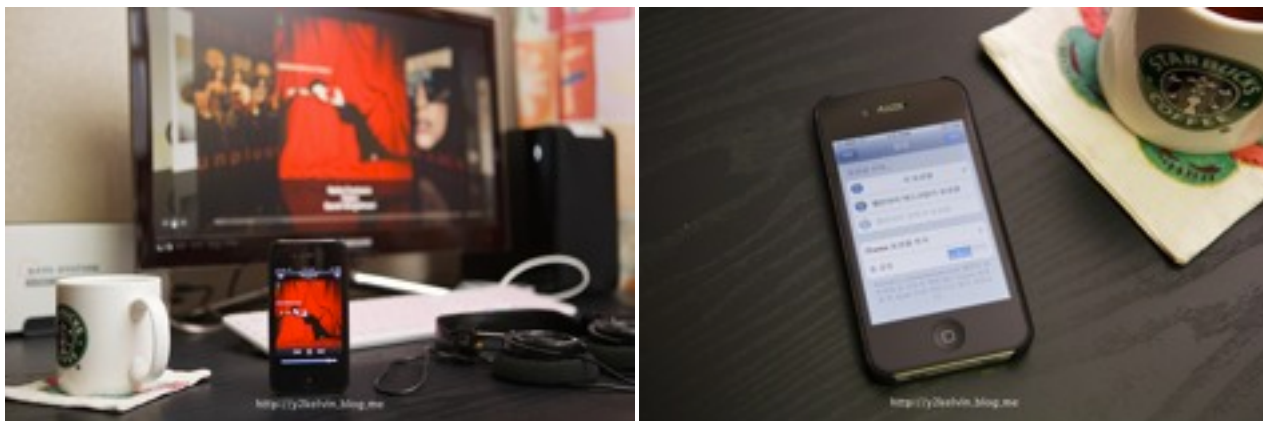
The specification of the PC2 in the diagram is very low - it's Pentium4 PC. It doesn't even support SPDIF digital output. It was good it recognized LA-200 right away when I connected the USB. As simple as it is, one just needs to confirm the device window.



The image on the left is PS3 for blu-ray movies and games. I connected the PS3 and 3D TV with HDMI cable. HDMI cable is capable of transmitting both the video and audio at the same time. Therefore 3D TV takes charge of the final transmission to LA-200. Right now, the 3D TV is connected to LA-200 using Optical cable by two kinds of audio input; PC1's analog input and PS3's HDMI.



When you look at the back panel of LA-200, you can see I have 3DTV connected to D3 (Optical digital), PC2 to USB, iPhone 4 to iPod (Analog mini stereo). As for now, only analog transmission is possible for iPhone 4 or iPod.



Since the PC2 was an old computer, I was a little worried that it wouldn't do its job as a digital audio system. But despite that, all 4 devices were connected with no trouble.

I played a few songs on iTunes. I was aware of the quality by theory, but I didn't expect such sound quality. It was a strange feeling despite my prior theoretical knowledge, it felt as if my hair was going to stand up.

Because there is no remote controller for LA-200, I used iTunes remote application to control PC2 and adjust volume.

This is the ability of full digital amplifier LA-200!



Hyung-Joo Lim / "Give me your wings" (16bit/44.1kHz 320Kbps MP3 / iTunes)

This is the first song I tested LA-200 with. There is no change in the clean vocal sound, and the sound becomes more relaxed and comfortable as the note goes higher. It's good, it's exactly this feeling.



Ayado Jiye / "For once in my life" (16bit/44.1kHz 192Kbps MP3 / iTunes)

This is a piece I listen to often. First of all, the vocal sound is loud enough and clear. But somehow, I get a feeling that Ayado Jiye's voice sounds heavier. To compare this with colors, it's as if the color is a little darker - in the sense of luminosity of colors, not freshness. But this is over my expectation. It's good.



Mariah Carey / "Hero" (16bit/44.1kHz 192Kbps MP3 / iTunes)

I happened to have played this song out of blue. I'm only disappointed that I listened to a mp3 version of this piece. I could really clearly Mariah's voice. I prefer this clearness. The only flaw is that the overall song sounds light, but I'm sure it's because of the file extension.



Whitney Houston / "I have nothing" (16bit/44.1kHz 192Kbps MP3 / iTunes)

It's been a while since I last felt this thrill. I don't know whether I should thank the speaker or the amplifier. I can feel the limit of 192Kbps mp3, but the amp and the speaker should be doing their jobs well since I get a good feeling about the sound.



Sarah Brightman / “Nella Fantasia” (16bit/44.1kHz 320Kbps MP3 / iTunes)

I listened to this piece three times, checking if it's really a mp3 file. It felt as if Sarah Brightman was singing on the clouds. This was very good too. The vocal sound is clear and the delicate tones are portrayed very well. It felt as if the rich low tones were quietly feeling the whole room.



Gwyneth Herbert / “My narrow man” (24bit/44.1kHz flac / Foobar2000 player)

This is a piece I listened to a lot when I explored the Fujitsu Eclipse audio set. I really longed to listen to this piece since LA-200 is capable of 192kHz/24bit input. (Note: possible LA-200's USB inputs are 44.1kHz, 48kHz) The recording quality is so good that it almost feels like Gwyneth Herbert is singing right in front of me. It surprised me that I could hear such quality sound in front of my busy desk. But the vocal still sounds a little emphasized and slightly heavy.



Tutti / Track 9 Vivaldi: Concerto in F, RV 569 - Allegro (16bit/44.1kHz 747Kbps ALAC file / iTunes)

I can't miss out classic music. I connected LA-200 with bookshelf type speakers, but staging is quite arial and sounds grandeur. The piece plays the complete ensemble with bird twittering violin sound and the room-filling orchestra. Each instrument sounds alive and the sound of the orchestra as a whole is fruitful and abundant. I wonder how this would sound in a bigger space than my room!

Cutting Edge Theater System on the Desk!



Movie Inception / Blu-ray Disc (Sony PS3 Blu-ray Player / Samsung TA950 Display)

I played the blu-ray movie “Inception” with 3D monitor connected with LA-200 and optical cable. I believe it's not an overstatement to say this is the movie after “Matrix”.

The scene I watched is where Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio) tells Ariadne (Ellen Page) that the current place is not reality, but a dream. It's quite a shocking scene. After Cobb finishes his phrase, dark clashing sound comes, the walls of the building gradually break apart and the debris fly around with the strong breaking sound.

The blu-ray quality is beyond explanation, but the sound really feels real. It's the quality a movie maniac shouldn't miss. Playing the very lowest sound might be a little hard on the edge, but the rich low sound is more than enough to be attracted. It's as if the sound has its strong focus. It's very clear. I believe it's the best combination to watch movies and listen to songs with LA-200 and Ki-1. The balance is perfect when watching movies. The size is ideal as well. I wish the speakers were a little smaller, but that might result in sound and input loss. No explanation is needed for the amplifier, it's strongly recommended.

Also Used for Casual Home Theater!



Movie Avatar / Blu-ray Disc (Sony PS3 Blu-ray player / Sony Bravia EX720)

This time, I connected Sony Bravia 3D TV with LA-200. It was very easy to move it because of its size and weight. The speakers are rather light as well. Sony Bravia's EX720 is an entry level 3D TV. It's the masterpiece for natural and realistic color representation. With LA-200 and Ki-1, I felt more eager to test the sound.

The source of the movie "Avatar" is blu-ray title, and I watched chapter 30. It's the all-out war scene; the helicopters take off in hope to attack Navis and conquer their territory. The sound of the Ikran's flapping wings felt so realistic that I felt my hair shiver.

(To watch test of the movie; go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FU_rBvYIWDk&feature=player_embedded#at=81)

LA-200 Headphone Amp function

LA-200 has also has headphone amp function that supports up to 600ohm headphones. I'm only surprised. The headphone I use the most on PC is Grado SR60.

When I listened to it, it sounded as if the sound has become slightly clearer and louder - but I didn't experience much change. I strongly believe the change will be more apparent with Senheiser HD600 (300ohm) or Beyer Dynamic DT-880 (250ohm Blue housing) headphones. My headphone is a normal one with only about 32ohms. I am unsatisfied to not have had the chance to experience the differences.



Epilogue

Lead Audio's DAC Digital Amplifier LA-200 is developed to be used on the desks. Even though the desk is a small space, it is full of all kinds of power consuming products like PC, monitor, keyboard, external storage driver, camera, books, mobile phones etc.

In such a small space, LA-200's ideal size allows one to simply place it anywhere on the desk. With 7 different digital/analog source inputs, one can easily connect it with any machines without rummaging. Thanks to this cutting edge 192kHz/24bit **Upcutting(?)** version jitter free DAC amp, the old model PC has transformed into a high quality digital audio player. One can become free of high power consuming analog amplifiers thanks to this 5W low power consuming full digital amplifier. And because it also supports headphones up to 600ohms, it had also become possible to listen to high quality head-fi music with external analog headphone amplifier without the need to manually connect the LA-200 to computer.

I would like to assess LA-200 as an ideal desktop digital amplifier, a well-made high quality jitter free DAC with the capacity of up to 25W output and outstanding sound quality. It has the most needed and the important functions which allows one to enjoy PC-fi and Head-fi with pleasure.

There were also a few things I was unsatisfied with. I can't stop but think it would have been much more comfortable with a remote controller to control the volume from any distance while watching a movie or listening to music.

I also wish LA-200 had digital outputs. With digital outputs, current hifi users could enjoy using LA-200 with USB output from laptops, netbooks, old model PCs because they don't have optical digital output. After using LA-200 myself, I was fascinated and adored the fact that I could use my old model PC as a great digital player. Even though I knew by the theory, I didn't realize how astounding the quality would be before actually using it.

I think it's a good idea to add USB docking function for worldwide used products such as iPods, iPhones and iPads and appeal to people who want to upgrade from docking speakers. The color or the design could be more casual. I also humbly hope to see high class products that supports multi channels in the future.

The main product I wanted to experience was Lead Audio's LA-200, but Audio Vector's Ki-1 Standard speakers were also very good products. I experienced the highest possible quality sound on my desk. If you are looking for good audio solution for PC-fi, or if you are listening to music from PC with high priced headphones, I highly recommend this fantastic combination of LA-200 and Ki-1 Standard. Now you can enjoy movies, music and games hi-fi on your desk as well.

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