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Computers, NAS drives and your music system (Vol.1)

With the launch of the groundbreaking Devialet D-Premier, it is now possible to obtain true high end performance from your computer by introducing it into your system as an extra source component. This can be done by hard-wiring or, when the optional plug-in board becomes available, by wireless streaming. For those on a budget, and who are interested mainly in streaming, the Micromega Airstream is currently the ideal choice. At Absolute Sounds we have gained considerable experience with interfacing computers and NAS drives into music systems and we feel it would be helpful to pass on our knowledge to consumers new to this exciting way of enjoying music. Over the years Absolute Sounds has carried out various experiments into the best hard-wired methods of computer audio playback. We will cover wireless music once we are familiar with the Devialet board, and also with the forthcoming HiEnd wireless box from Micromega.
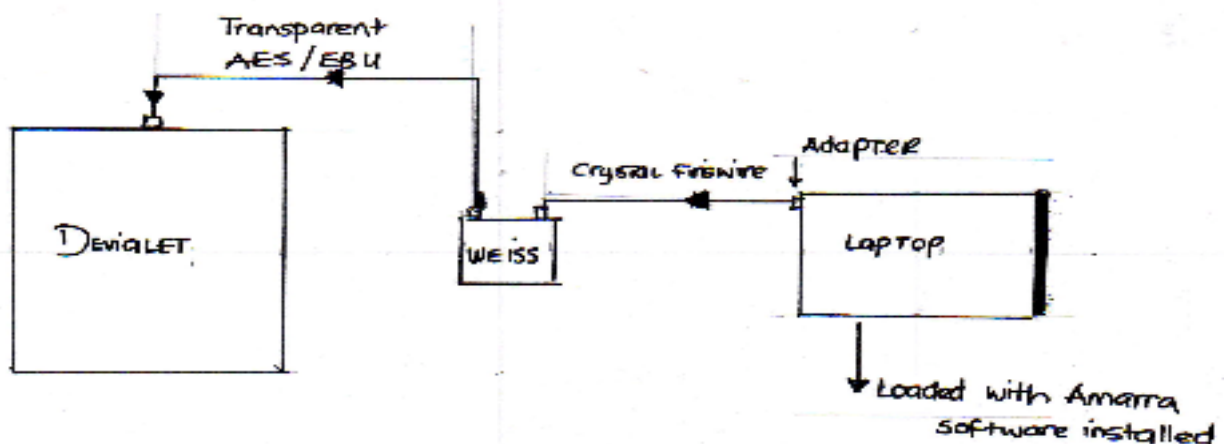
Meanwhile, in order of preference, our favourite hardwired connections are:

- Firewire
- Coaxial S/PDIF

Our preferred means of storage is a laptop computer with solid state drive (SSD), rather than the normal 5000/7200rpm optical drive. A laptop offers the extra convenience of being battery-powered, and thus easily movable to your listening position with appropriate cabling. One word of caution: when storing music just use WAV and AIFF files, and if you want compression use Apple Lossless or FLAC. Taking the Devialet D-Premier as an excellent one-stop solution to playing back hi-res or standard 44.1khz files through your system, we will define two methods in order of preference, using the Apple MacBook Pro as an example:

System 1.: Devialet firewire interface

a). Source: Macbook pro 2.66Ghz with Intel Core i7, 512GB SSD drive here. It is important to install Amarra which will allow you to playback hi-res files through iTunes. You will also need for the firewire interface a Firewire 400 to 800 adapter

b).) Firewire cable from computer needs to be CrystalFire, or CrystalFire Dreamline. These are far superior to standard firewire cables and are every bit as important as the rest of the cabling in your system. Click here for Crystal pricelist.

c). We now need to interface firewire from computer to Devialet, and for that there is a fantastic little unit called the Weiss INT202 firewire interface.

d). We now interface INT202 to the Devialet, and for that we recommend Transparent AES/EBU

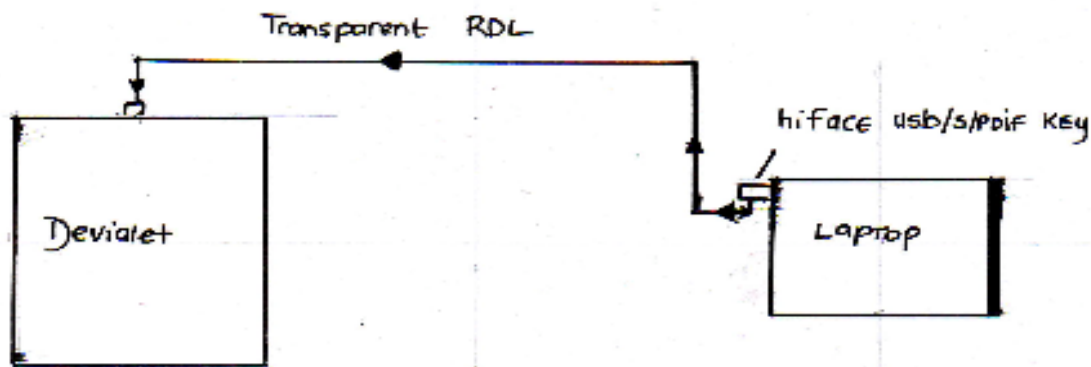e). Play music and enjoy the world of digital audio files.

System 2:   Devialet S/PDIF Interface

a). Source: Macbook pro 2.66Ghz with Intel Core i7, 512GB SS drive here, It is not imperative to use a MacBook Pro with firewire output, since in this case you are only looking for USB out. Again, it is important to install Amarra for playing back hi-res files through iTunes. You will also need the hiFace from M2TECH, (USB key with clocked S/PDIF out).

b Recommended cable from computer with hiFace to Devialet D-Premier is Transparent RDL.

c). Play music and enjoy the world of digital audio files.

The recommendations above are the best achieved by Absolute Sounds at the moment, but those recommendations can obviously change as new hardware interface becomes available, and also new cables. The diagrams above should help you understand better what a tremendous future lies ahead, and how units such as the Devialet D-Premier and some Micromega products can bring us this great music into our systems.

Please contact Absolute Sounds if you require further information or the details of an authorised dealer. With the exception of Apple products, all components listed can be obtained by Absolute Sounds for authorised dealers. Amarra can be downloaded from the internet.