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POWER SUPPLY

# WATTSON AUDIO

## Madison Power S

*Laurent Thorin*



**Tested in our issue 59, the excellent Wattson amplifier was accompanied by the eponymous streamer, the two making a perfect pair. Today, the Swiss manufacturer returns with a separate power supply dedicated entirely to its high-end network player. The opportunity was too good for us to pass up trying out this strategic option.**

Like Naim in its day, CH Precision and Heed today, and a few other conscientious manufacturers, any audio engineer worth their salt will tell you that the power supply is the nerve centre of any electronic device. You can deploy the most beautiful circuits, but if they are not properly powered, they will be a flop «. Hence the importance of developing a specific power supply for each product and, if possible, providing an option to enhance its performance.

**ORIGIN**

Switzerland

**PRICE**

€2,495

**DIMENSIONS**

175 x 155 x 87 mm

**WEIGHT**

2.3 kg

**UNIVERSAL AC INPUT**

100–240 V AC 50/60 Hz

**OUTPUT VOLTAGE**

5.0 V DC

**MAXIMUM OUTPUT CURRENT**

3.0 A

CH Precision, a sister company of Wattson Audio, offers upgrades for many of its products through the addition of a high-performance separate power supply. It didn't take long for this idea to spread to the offices next door!

Wattson Audio already had several excellent streamers in its catalogue, Emerson and Madison, and our own tests had convinced us of the benefits of a better power supply. Today, with the Power S, the Swiss manufacturer is simply confirming this fact by presenting its proprietary solution. As is often the case, it is the best we have been able to try. And it makes sense that, after developing the source, they would decide to enhance the engine!

The Madison Power S has been designed to be compatible with all Madison Streamers, both old and new, as its chassis has the same footprint and proportions, allowing the two components to be stacked on top of each other for a guaranteed visual effect.

But the good news is that, beyond the Madison range, the Power S can also be paired with the Emerson Analog and Emerson Digital, where its regulated power supply further improves performance.

The Power S is housed in a small, rigid and lightweight case milled from a block of aluminium and elegantly finished in two attractive variations of light or dark grey. The front panel is free of any controls. Rotate it 180° and you'll find the traditional IEC socket block and a Lemo-type connector for a detachable cable connecting it to the streamer. The manufacturer supplies two copies: one for the Madison and one for the Emerson. The case is small but particularly dense, which is reflected in its significant weight. Like the streamer, it rests on four small circular feet made of milled aluminium.

Inside is a meticulously designed hybrid power supply architecture that combines the best of both worlds: the efficiency and speed of a high-frequency switching stage with the finesse and substance of discrete linear regulation.

This approach minimises noise and ripple while maintaining speed, stability and a power supply that Wattson does not hesitate to describe as exceptional. The engineers have fine-tuned every part of a completely new circuit, from input filtering to voltage regulation. The result is a power supply that not only offers unwavering electrical performance, but also sonic benefits such as better resolution, contrast and musical flow.

It should also be noted that the Power S is equipped with monitoring and protection circuits against overvoltage, overcurrent, short circuits and high temperatures.

Just because these products are small does not mean they should be underestimated. They have been developed as the most ambitious systems from their big brother, CH Precision. The Power S thus maximises the performance spectrum of a compact but superlative streamer.

## **INSTALLATION**

It's difficult not to be brief in this paragraph. There is only a small umbilical cord to connect between the two devices for everything to work optimally. It should be added that we have the choice of placing the Madison on its power supply, next to its power supply, or on another support. In the first two cases, it looks much nicer. But our experience has taught us that it is better to isolate the sensitive electronics dedicated to signal conversion from a power supply which, in one way or another, always produces a certain amount of vibration.



### THE SOUND

In life, nothing beats a good power supply. Every time we have had the opportunity to test a device whose performance can be improved with an optional power supply, the verdict is clear! It is always better, even much better. And here, the second option was chosen. Thanks to its new box, the Madison streamer has completely changed category. When we tested the Swiss brand's power amplifier, we had already carried out tests to upgrade this excellent network player. We started with an ifi Audio iPower X, then an SBooster, and finally the Ferrum Hypsos.

With each increment, the level of performance increased significantly. But we didn't know at the time that Wattson Audio was already working on its own separate power supply. And the fact is that this Power S outperforms all our attempts. The Madison alone and the Madison + Power S offer two very distinct levels of performance, like two devices from the same family at very different price points.

The very first sensation offered by this new combo is that of a remarkable ability to individualise. Each musical element can be listened to and appreciated in its uniqueness before blending into a musical whole. Everything is so precise that the listener can easily access two levels of playback: the component alone, and the component within its context. We had already experienced this even more explicitly with the CH Precision C1.2 converter, with or without its X1 power supply. The resolution power of this duo is quite surprising in this price range. Yes, because we are still comparing them with streamers in the €7,000-8,000 range.

However, even at this already substantial price, the two Wattsons perform very well. Not only do they offer a remarkable amount of information, but they also perform with a particularly low noise threshold. This clarity of sound is a common thread that remained with us throughout our test. The feeling that noise pollution has been removed from the playback process makes the experience of recorded music much more natural.



Far from delivering spectacular performance, the two Wattsons seek to immerse you deeply in the musical experience. No attempt is made to seduce you. Instead, everything is done to attract your ear with a wealth of detail, subtlety, nuance and openness. Unlike the Madison used alone, the duo substantially extends the audible spectrum upwards and downwards. This second dimension inevitably has an impact on the soundstage, which unfolds with infinitely more conviction. In terms of depth, this is to be expected, but also in terms of height, which is much less common. As a result, the spatialisation of the musical message is more explicit, and the way in which the listener approaches this varied landscape is very pleasant. We are immersed in the sound flow. But always with a feeling of comfort and well-being. The timbres are soft, natural, never overloaded. Generally speaking, the Wattson duo never pushes for more. On the contrary, it always seeks to offer an essential trait, a subtle but refined interpretation. Listening to these two Wattsons, one gets the feeling that everything is simple, easy, obvious. But

from experience, we can say that achieving such a comfortable result, especially when listening at high volume, is far from obvious. It requires a great deal of know-how and technological mastery. To conclude this test session, we couldn't resist connecting the Power S to our Emerson Digital and we felt the same thing: the sensation of the system taking off. This experience literally brings us full circle and validates Wattson's choices across its entire range.

### OUR CONCLUSION

It is always amazing to see how such small boxes can provide such great emotions. We have always loved Wattson's creations. Audio and this new power supply is exactly the type of product we appreciate: compact, powerful, extremely easy to use and, ultimately, hyper-musical. We must applaud the overall philosophy of the brand, which seems to have a clear path ahead and is rolling out its expertise and programme in a truly surprising way. We can bet that we haven't seen the last of Wattson Audio's pleasant surprises. ■