



TEST.

Keces P8

23.06.2017 // DIRK SOMMER

After having occupied me with the well-priced Soul-M, combined to the Keces DC-116 power supply, I finally bought that server for my wife's audio system. The purchase of two power supplies, astonishingly, wasn't recommended by Keces' distributor Robert Ross – the review, by the way, also imposed a must-have-impulse on colleague Peter Banholzer, who, already, was a proud owner of a Mytek Brooklyn.

However, the owner of the German Keces distribution company didn't suddenly lose confidence in one of the manufacturers he was representing, but rather had the opportunity to listen to the new P8 power supply right before the High End show. And since then, he has been convinced that it is capable to realize significantly bigger improvements than the replacement of a standard power supply against the Keces DC-116 could. The P8 is even larger, heavier and more expensive than the DC-116. It also comes up with a solid, well-engineered metal enclosure and, in addition, with a large white-lettered display, which offers information on the given voltages at the two outputs and the current power consumption of the connected components. Furthermore, there is a USB port that provides up to one ampere of current.

Using the ifi iDefender 3.0 to simply provide clean power via the USB connection to the converter, then the P8's third output is a welcome extra feature. However, the big Keces is not as flexible as the DC-116, which internally allows the adjustment of the two outputs to a multitude of voltages. Here, there are two models with only one output, one model offering the choice between 9 and 12, the other model between 19 and 20 volts. In addition to that there are four so-called "dual versions", in which then each of the two voltages can be varied to a small extent by means of a switch.



In its aluminum case with rounded corners and company logo and name engraved in the lid and the front panel, the analogue power supply shows up like a noble hi-fi component

Similar to the power supplies from SBooster, when buying a P8 it is very much determined by the voltage(s) of the connected component. But even in these fast-moving digital times, you surely are not intending to exchange your components in an annual cycle, aren't you? During the test procedure, however, this looks a little different. Since I would like to compare the "big" Keces power supply with the DC-116, the latter supplying power to the living room's audio system hosting the SoulM music server and the Mytek Brooklyn DAC, I ordered a dual version offering 19 and 12 volt options. The two safety switches on the back allow for reducing the voltage of the first output down to 18 and for the second output down to 9 volts. As aforementioned, further adjustments are not possible. The Mutec MC-3+ Smart Clock USB is not only responsible for processing the digital signal between the server and the converter, but also isolates the two devices galvanically. So at this point I dispense with the Defender3.0, so the 5 volts output of the P8 remains unused.



The P8 comes with two connector cables and one set of adapters

As it is normal with a power supply, it's the voluminous toroidal transformer together with the two smoothing capacitor banks that instantly catch one's attention. Transformer and electrolytic capacitors are separated by a heat sink, on which some of the active components are mounted for voltage regulation. Three more of these are mounted to the right side of the enclosure. Design and workmanship of the circuit boards offer no grounds for complaint.

Although having already included my wife's audio system into my testing work at some point before, I should nevertheless find here some words to describe its sound characteristics, particularly in light of the fact that I am intending to solely depend on it for this test run. For a long time the excellent Acapella Violon VI lacked appropriate front-end components. Thanks to Einstein's The Poweramp and Brinkmann's Marconi, we now also have a reasonable amplification at our command. Using Swiss Cable Reference cabling almost throughout the system – ah, not the Plus version here, as in this combination it would create too much pressure in the lows –, ensures the necessary speed, openness and good spatial imaging. The audio system in the listening room – this one living up to a quite different price range – offers an even better resolution, reveals somewhat more detail, and shows slightly more agility in the lower frequencies, despite doing this in a more slender way. This can make bad recordings sometimes sound a little "scraggy". Especially because of the more pushy bass, the living room's system, if compared to my "working tool", usually is better liked by visitors less infected by the hi-fi virus. For me, it is always some kind of disillusioning to hear that even the most expensive diamond tweeters or high-class ribbon tweeters do not have an earthly chance of ever achieving the lightness and colourfulness of the ion tweeters used in the Acapellas. Certainly, the living room system could perform in a more harmonious way, if, for example, the loudspeakers were positioned in the room just as uncompromising symmetrical as those in the listening room. But, in the living room – as already mentioned time and again before – I bear a more advisory function rather than the absolute hi-fi sovereignty. Since this doesn't apply to me only, our living room installation comes certainly closer to the reality in typical German living environments than the almost perfect conditions in my listening room.

As the integration of the system in the living room rather follows the rules for room comfort – i.e. the Acapella's left horn has a substantially shorter distance to sidewall and roof slope as the right one –, I therefore haven't developed enough experience in evaluating components in that system compared to the system in the listening room. However, at least I simplify my choice of music by starting with Ravi Shankar's "West Eats Meat": The tabla intro evolves with much pressure in the lows, but at a bit slower pace than in the listening room. The



During the photo session no power consuming device had been connected to the Keces P8, as shown by the "zero" values for current consumption on the display. By the way, the SoulM consumes 0.6, the Mytek DAC about 1 ampere



The voltage selector switches are protected against accidental actuation. In addition, there are protective circuits which respond to overload, overvoltage and undervoltage. This is where safety comes before flexibility in the voltage setting

timpani in the track's main section overflow with energy, the bass grooves and creaks, while the colourfulness of the percussion is simply fantastic. However, the sound does not free itself entirely from the speakers and the spatial array has a slight spin to the left - not very surprising, if we put into consideration that the left speaker is notably closer to the limiting walls. Surprisingly, the change of the SoulM's power supply brings quite a benefit, even in this particular discipline: Due to the now better resolution, the reverb tails now sound a lot more distinctive, and therefore illuminate also the right side to a higher degree. Also to my surprise, the larger power supply creates a wider and more stable stage. And the echoes of the voice now vanish even a little further back into the depths of the room. With the P8 the performance gets even more detailed and the tonal colours – already one of this system's best qualities – ablaze even a little more expressive. From now on I wouldn't want to miss Keces' bigger power supply anymore.



The interior of the P8 is dominated by a large toroidal transformer. The voltage regulators are located on the heat sinks left and right of the capacitor banks

One of the positive aspects in streaming for me – the respective settings of the app have to be activated of course – is the fact that while searching for certain tracks one regularly encounters long forgotten covers: This time, the bird on the cover of Albert Mangelsdorff's Triplicity, with Arild Anderson on bass and Pierre Favre on drums, made me pause for a moment. The virtuoso's trombone, while played through SoulM, Keces, Mutec and Mytec, and not to forget the Acapellas, sounded incredibly powerful and energetic, yet still colourful and fluent. In "Green Shading Into Blue", it is Arild Anderson's gripping double-bass playing with its percussive attacks and melodic passages that particularly fascinates. After savouring this short indulging trip into jazzy euphony, I get back to one of the usual test records: On Patrick Heral's "Improvisation", taken from Le Concert De Parfums, the P8 lets the SoulM create a much deeper room and unwind the playback substantially faster, while the low frequency range of drums and timpani sounds more flashy and nuanced - yes, this simply reveals more character. This isn't a question of marginal differences, such as those caused by the use of better component feet. Here the improvements are much more drastic: Sonically speaking, I probably never came across a better spent 300 euros – as this is the price difference between the Keces DC-116 and the P8. However, at this moment I shouldn't be too enthusiastic with such exuberant praise: There is no guarantee that the better sound probably doesn't relate to the fact that now separate Keces power supplies are used for converter and server.

So I disconnect the Mytek Brooklyn from the DC-116, and connect it to the P8 instead and re-play the "Improvisation", since I have just been listening to it: The increase in spatial depth is almost unbelievable! From the Melco, the Aries Femto and the Chord DAVE I know into which spaciousness this track can take you, but from the SoulM and the Mytek, combined with Keces and Mutec, I yet haven't heard such an impressive spatial imaging. Impressive, how meticulously the Violon VI reveals any improvement carried out at the front-end. To mention that the Brooklyn immensely benefits also in all other hi-fi disciplines from the power supply effected through the P8, seems to me quite pointless here. Instead, I better start enjoying some well-known and rediscovered records in extremely high quality also in the living room now!

STATEMENT

The fact that the quality of a power supply significantly influences the sound is known by everyone who even randomly is involved in hi-fi and high-end. Of course, this is also the case with digital source components. But that the Keces for just about 700 euros transforms already very good components like the SoulM and the Mytek Brooklyn into affordable high-end jewels, I never would have thought this could be possible: This is a real experience!

LISTENED WITH

Music server	SoulM w/ Keces DC-116
Clock generator	Mutec MC-3+ Smart Clock USB
D/A converter	Mytek Brooklyn w/ Keces DC-116
Pre amp	Brinkmann Marconi
Power amp	Einstein The Poweramp
Loudspeaker	Acapella Violon VI
Cables	Swiss Cables Reference (Plus), Habst Ultra III, Audioquest Diamond, SunWire Reference
Accessories	Einstein The Octopus, HighEndNovum Multivocal Resonator, Harmonix feet, Audioquest Jitterbug, Franc Audio accessories and Acoustic System feet

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATIONS

Keces P8

DC output voltage	Single versions: 9/12V, 19/20V, Dual versions: 5/7V and 9/12V, 9/12V and 12/15V, 9/12V and 18/19V, 9/12V and 20/24V additionally 1 x USB (5V, 1A)
DC connector	2,1mm Barrel, adapter supplied by distributor
AC input voltage	115V 60Hz / 230V 50Hz, switchable
Enclosure	Aluminum
Dimensions (W/H/D)	300/78/240mm
Price	700 euros

MANUFACTURER

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