



# Field of streams

Two new streamers appear to combine an extraordinary specification at a rock-bottom price. **Ed Selley** looks for the catch

**S**ome companies seem pre-destined to be a disruptive force in certain categories. Wiim hasn't been around for very long, but its impact on network audio is already being felt thanks to some very keen pricing. How keen? Well, a Wiim Mini can be had for £90 and the two Pro models here are barely more expensive at £150 and £220 respectively.

The reason these two have been grouped together in this review is because their front-end is identical and they differ only in their decoding. This front-end is deeply impressive as well. Qobuz, Tidal, Deezer, Amazon

Music, Spotify, Napster, TuneIn, Calm, VTuner, Soundcloud and Pandora are all natively supported, backed up by the ability to access a local library. There is then AirPlay and Chromecast as well as Alexa integration. They also play AIFF files even though the specs don't suggest they should. In short, they do everything you would reasonably expect a streamer to do.

There's more too. The Pro Plus is Roon Ready and Roon Tested (the Pro is Roon Ready) so can be used in a Roon ecosystem, making them one of the most affordable ways to add a Roon compatible zone to a household. If you aren't a Roon user, you might

## DETAILS

**PRODUCT**  
Wiim Pro/Pro+

**ORIGIN**  
China

**TYPE**  
Plug-and-play streamers

**WEIGHT**  
0.3kg/0.4kg

**DIMENSIONS (WxHxD)**  
140 x 42 x 140mm

**FEATURES**

- Supports sample rates up to 24-bit/192kHz (Pro) 24-bit/768kHz and DSD512 (Pro+)
- MQA compatible
- Roon ready
- AirPlay 2 and Chromecast
- Bluetooth

**DISTRIBUTOR**  
Henley Audio Ltd.

**WEBSITE**  
wiimhome.com  
henleyaudio.co.uk

not be rushing to add it because the Wiim app is very good. It's logically laid out and slick to use. This is enhanced on the Pro models because Wiim has bumped up the memory and fitted a more capable ARM A53 processor to make use of it. The speed they handle large libraries is noticeably better than the Mini.

Then, there's the multi-room aspect. It's incredibly easy to get multiple Wiim units up and running in the same app and, should you wish to play them all at once, the latency they display is perfect. There is also an interesting auto calibration function that centres around a built-in microphone that allows the Wiim to check its surroundings and calibrate against other units in the house for latency. Both models also have an additional analogue and optical input that can be sent on to a connected amp or made available to additional Wiims on the network.

In terms of their format handling and decoding hardware, the Pro is an evolution of the Mini and makes use of a Texas Instruments (nee Burr Brown) PCM5121 DAC, giving PCM support to 24-bit/192kHz and 'partial' MQA support. This is probably all the capability many people will ever need, but the Pro+ is a more impressive beast. It uses an AKM 4493SEQ DAC, which offers PCM support to 768kHz and adds up to DSD512 capability. There's no other self-contained

## The performance of the Pro+ keeps more expensive rivals honest

streamer anywhere near the price that can match that and even affordable rivals that come with some hidden caveats.

Externally both streamers are identical and, with the best will in the world, aren't the prettiest you can buy, but all criticism does have to be viewed through their low price. They are solidly constructed too and, unlike the simpler Mini, benefit from an Ethernet connection to improve their already excellent stability. Power is via a 5V 2A USB line, so it's possible to run them without a mains socket depending on what else is in your rack. As well as the improved DAC, the Pro+ is also supplied with a useful IR remote handset, which can be used with the Pro as well when purchased on its own for £20.

Having completed the painless setup – something that even some rather

expensive streamers cannot match for ease – both Pros are run at the same time via identical cabling into equally identical inputs on an AVID Accent (HFC 508) integrated amp.

## Sound quality

Any thoughts of an 'imbalance' between a £4,500 amp and a pair of streamers that cost less than a tenth of that combined evaporates after a few minutes of listening, serving as an eloquent reminder that the cost of capable digital has plummeted in recent years. The Pro takes the delicate but surprisingly dense tracks of Gary Jules' *Trading Snakeoil For Wolf tickets* and opens them out into the beautiful and atmospheric compositions they can be. Jules

## It's incredibly easy to get multiple Wiim units up and running in the same app

himself sounds entirely convincing. He doesn't have a tremendously powerful voice, but the Pro captures the emotion it has and ensures he doesn't sound small or constrained.

Increase the scale and power required by moving to the boisterous and energetic *Electricity* by Ibibio Sound System and the Pro responds well, ensuring that there's no sense of compression and opening the performance out beyond the speakers. This is not the most propulsive sounding device I have ever heard, but it maintains a decent grasp on tempos and – as long as a little care is taken with the partnering equipment to ensure it isn't too soporific – it is a consistently good listen.



The Pro+ offers a similar spec to Cambridge Audio's excellent MXN10 (HFC 503). Judged without recourse to their price tags, the Cambridge Audio takes the win because it sounds genuinely brilliant, comes in a nicer chassis that is both more attractive and better made, and the whole ensemble feels a little more hi-fi. Stream Magic is a good interface just like the Wiim one and there's Roon too. The problem is that when you do consider the price, the fact that the Pro+ takes the MXN10 to the wire and does so costing over £200 less is hard to ignore.



The biggest catch that the Pro faces though is that spending £70 more buys a much more formidable device. The Pro+ sets about the same Ibibio Sound Machine recording with a vigour and energy that feels worth rather more than the price of a reasonable night out. I'm reticent to ascribe everything that the Pro+ does to a sweetness to voices and instruments that the Pro+ manages to balance at the same time as sounding bigger, more confident and altogether more engaging as a result.

This advantage only increases as the sample rates get higher. The sublime 24-bit/88.2kHz version of Dead Can Dance's *Towards The Within* sounds very listenable on the Pro, while the effect on the Pro+ is seriously impressive. It creates a tangible reproduction of the Mayfair Theatre and makes Lisa Gerrard and Brendan Perry properly living presences within it. The manner in which it does this is impressively immersive. Given AKM's proficiency in this area, I suspect that when its Roon certification comes

online, the option to convert content to DSD could result in a sound that is very hard to beat for the money.

This essentially leads to a two-part conclusion. Judged on its own merit, the Pro is an exceptional bit of kit but it suffers a little precisely because I put it up against the Pro+. It finds itself not necessarily doing that much more than the Wiim Mini in pure functionality terms and costing a little more at the same time. The RCA out (over the 3.5mm connection the Mini uses) and the Roon certification are useful, though, and it's still impressive value for £150. Plus, if you want to use it to output to an external DAC, it does everything that the Pro+ does.

## Conclusion

For £220 though, the Pro+ is quite sensational value. That excellent streaming front-end is now mated to a decoding platform that is genuinely excellent and delivers a performance that can keep rather more expensive rivals honest. You even get a remote into the bargain. Wiim has dropped the price of truly capable streaming down to an exceptionally reasonable level and in the Pro+ it has combined it with audio hardware that can take on all contenders too. I cannot wait to see what it does next •

## Hi-Fi Choice

### OUR VERDICT

**SOUND QUALITY**  
★★★★★

**VALUE FOR MONEY**  
★★★★★

**BUILD QUALITY**  
★★★★★

**FEATURES**  
★★★★★

**OVERALL**  
★★★★★

**LIKE:** Features; ease of use; more than respectable sound

**DISLIKE:** The Pro is slightly overshadowed by the Pro+

**WE SAY:** A superb streaming front-end that will work well in a variety of setups