

LUMIN P1 Network Player Review

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LUMIN P1

Network Player

£8,495



The new [LUMiN P1](#) is a technical *tour de force* that promises to become the digital hub for your audio-visual system. Priced at £8,495, it is not for the faint-hearted, but to think of it as simply a network music player is selling it short.

It differs from other LUMiN players by its inclusion of a total of nine digital and analogue inputs, as well as outputs, so can be used as a preamplifier that only requires a power amplifier and loudspeakers to complete a system. With inbuilt HDMI inputs, you can connect your 4K Blu-ray player or Apple TV device directly to the [P1](#), or it can be used as a regular network player streaming from your NAS drive, [Qobuz](#), [TIDAL](#), Spotify, TuneIn Radio or Apple AirPlay compatible devices.

As far as where it sits on the LUMiN sound quality ladder, as a network streamer, the P1 is second only to the range-topping X1. It's a single-box solution that uses two ES9028PRO Sabre DACs configured in mono mode for native DSD512 and PCM384 playback. They are used in

conjunction with dual high-grade Femto crystal oscillators and the company's proprietary FPGA clock distribution system. The circuitry is dual mono throughout and with both balanced and unbalanced inputs and outputs; the outputs are coupled with dual Lundahl LL7401 transformers. A linear power supply is built into the P1's chassis using two large toroidal transformers with separate stages for analogue and digital power circuitry.



Something I haven't seen previously on network streamers is the provision for a fibre-optic networking connection as well as the regular RJ45 Ethernet socket. There is a slot that accepts an aftermarket SFP module, which stands for small form-factor pluggable. It is an optical transceiver module typically used in data communication networks. Being an optical connection, it is galvanically isolated, so immune to digital network noise

and able to connect devices many hundreds of metres away without loss. The Melco S100 audiophile switch and ADOT MC01 fibre kit are compatible with the P1. For a complete specification, technology and flexibility listing, see the LUMiN website, as there is simply too much to list here in the review!

GETTING GOING

To set up a new device, simply plug in the power cord and an RJ45 network cable connected to your home network (LUMiN does not support wireless connections for the sake of sound quality) and switch the rear power button on. The front screen states that it's 'Ready for Music' within a few seconds. Dead easy and painless!

I downloaded the LUMiN Music app to my Android mobile phone and an Apple iPad connected to my wireless home network, then opened the app. It immediately asked if it could upgrade the P1's internal firmware to V14.5. The initial firmware was released back in Dec 2012, giving you an idea of the ongoing software development that has allowed LUMiN to become so full-featured, with good support for streaming apps. I am happy to report that it is also very stable and reliable.



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The app will automatically detect your UPnP media server, NAS, computer or attached USB hard drive. There is support for TIDAL, Qobuz, Spotify and TuneIn Radio internet streaming apps. Simply enter your login credentials once for TIDAL and Qobuz, and the app will find your playlists and favourites and won't require separate logins from other devices. For Spotify, the LUMiN app opens the existing Spotify app on your device, so you can choose to output to the P1 as the preferred device. Similarly, [Roon](#) quickly found it on the network and operated smoothly and drama-free.

I used balanced cables from the P1 to the excellent [Copland CSA 100](#) amplifier, driving [JBL HDI-3800](#)

loudspeakers for most of the review. A lovely metal remote control came standard with the P1, which uses two CR2032 batteries cleverly hidden behind a magnetically attached opening. Having a remote control to change the volume, source or skip a track is very useful and negates the need to reach for a smartphone or tablet for these menial and repetitive tasks.



THE LISTENING

To get a handle on how it sounded, I primarily used the LUMiN P1 as a music streamer listening to hi-res Qobuz and Tidal tracks. I was delighted to hear a smooth, solid and highly detailed sound, one that allowed the music to shine and didn't draw attention away from the content. The P1 has a fullness and completeness to the sound

that's lacking from lesser devices, playing with a top to bottom sense of uniformity and evenness that elevates the P1 as a very good sounding playback device.

I reviewed the LUMiN T2 network player [back in March 2020](#) and can confidently state that the more expensive P1 is a more musical and competent sounding player with greater resolution, extension, dynamics and ease. For example, **Adele's** *Easy On Me* was colourfully and vividly portrayed through the P1 with her voice front and centre, rock-steady, with all the nuances, inflections and emotion intact. The accompanying piano, bass and kick drum were expertly blended into the background to compliment her voice.

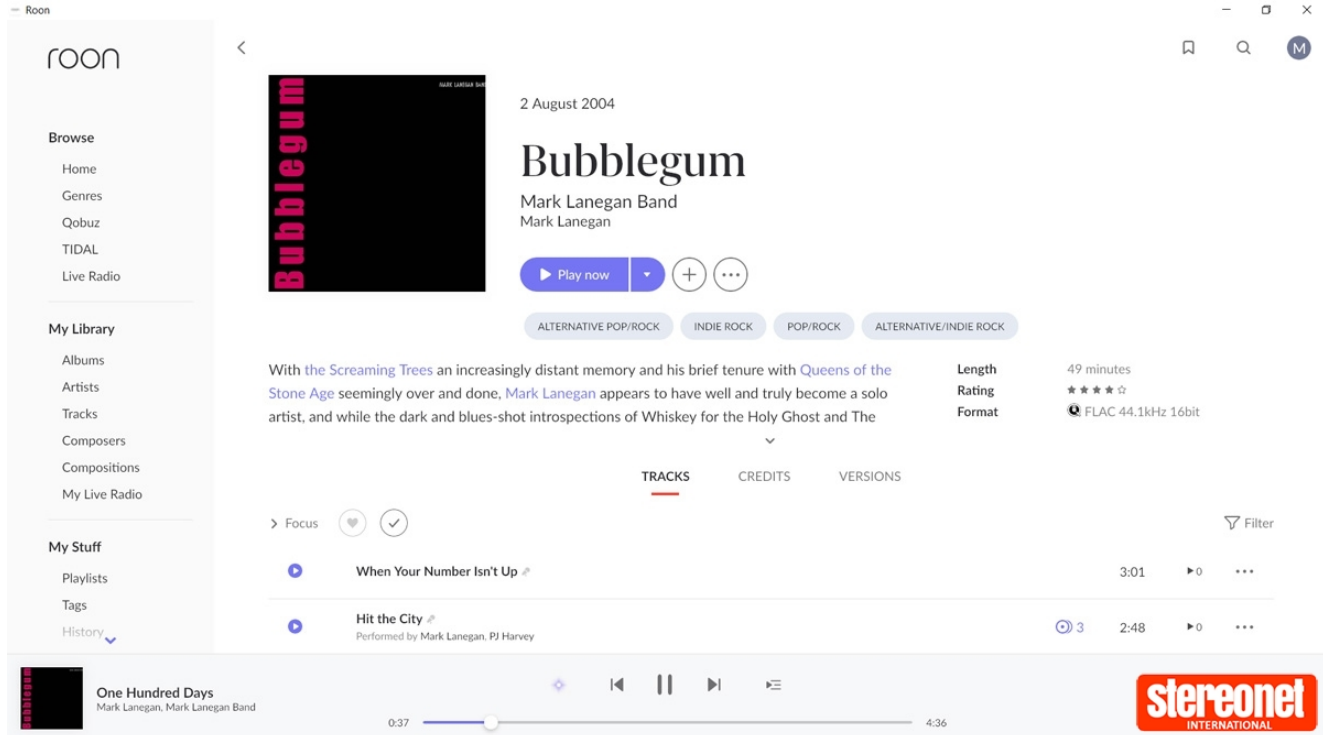
One Hundred Days by the late **Mark Lanegan** is one of my go-to tracks for getting a sense of tonal balance in new equipment. Mark's vocal is suitably gruff and dark, and the separation and harmony between his voice and Chris Goss's voice were as good as I've ever heard via the LUMiN. It had a smooth and realistic transition from the upper bass to the lower midrange, which is critical to get right. With Tidal MQA Studio showing on the front panel display as being supported, *Welcome to the World of the Plastic Beach* by **Gorillaz feat. Snoop Dogg** had subwoofer-deep bass levels, and the P1 showed absolutely no difficulty with the energy and impact of the bass notes with excellent definition and texture.



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The P1 has been masterfully voiced then, with highs and lows extended more than I have previously heard. It is smooth and detailed, just slightly warm, and doesn't seem rolled off in any way. There was quite a bit of high-frequency energy in 2L's hi-res recording by **Tone Wik & Barokkanerne** *Recitative and Aria* from **Vivaldi's** *Cantata RV 679*; the P1 didn't make it sound harsh, bright, or overly lit, but neither was it smoothed-over or dull. The result was a very enjoyable compromise.

When it comes to extracting detail from a track, the P1 holds its head high. Listening to *Aventine* by **Agnes Obel**, I was struck by the quiet backgrounds and crystal-clear viewing window into the performance. All the notes had air and space around them, were fully formed and were allowed to decay naturally. Piano, cello and strings sounded authentic and realistic.

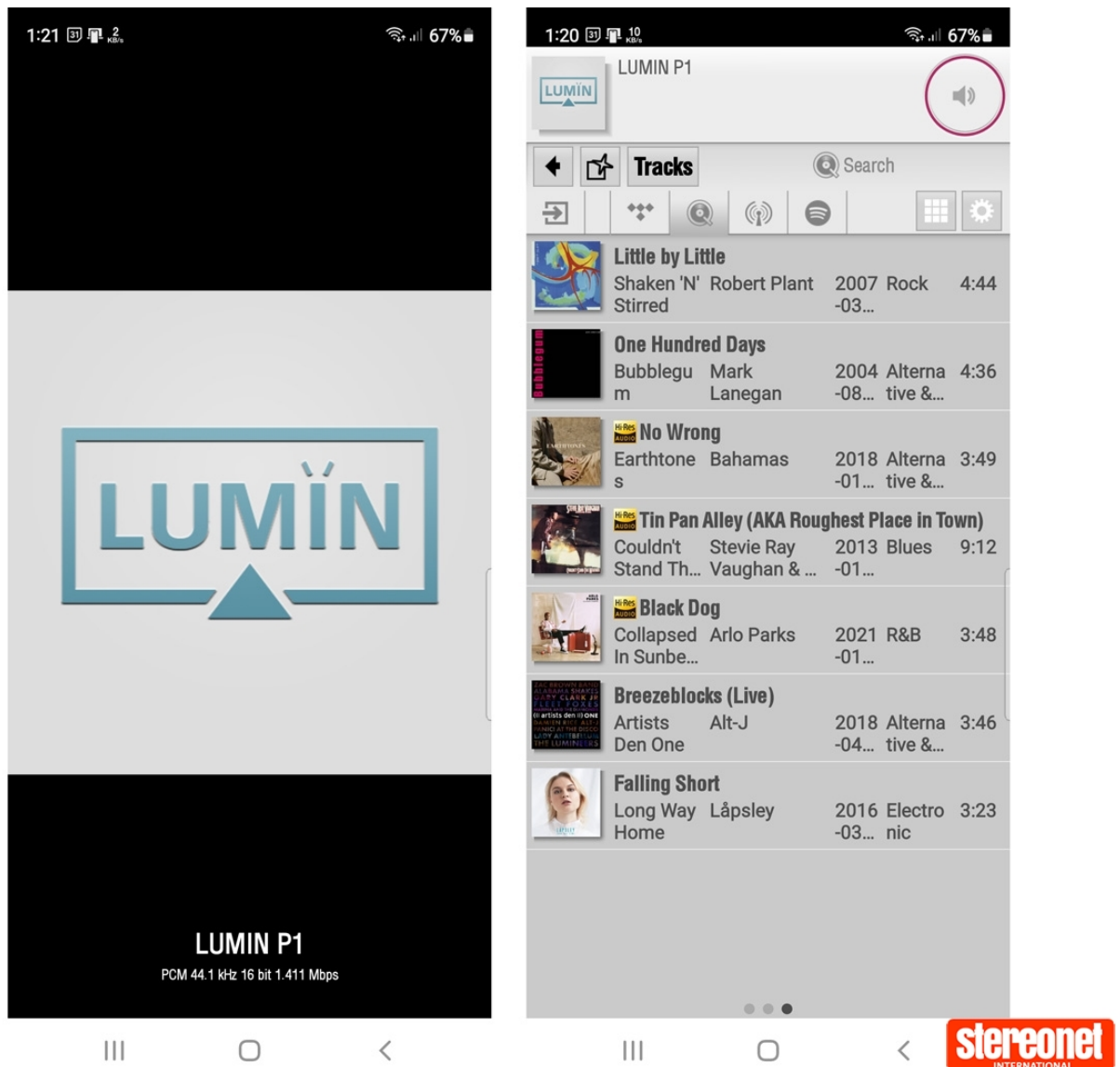


The P1 also plays dynamic music with considerable delivery speed, control and ease. The bass line of *Don't Start Now* by **Dua Lipa** proved punchy and didn't skimp on visceral slam. The notes started and stopped in perfect timing with the rest of the frequency range, sounding great even at high volume levels.

The almost three-dimensional recording of *Bodas de oro* by **Ry Cooder and Manuel Galban** showed the LUMiN to have a lovely wide left-to-right spread to its soundstage, which extended well beyond the loudspeakers. I found the front-to-back aspect just a little shy of some of the best streamers I've heard, and this was especially noticeable using the regular copper Ethernet cable feed.

Swapping for an SFP optical transceiver connected to the P1 improved things. The background didn't sound any quieter, but I got a greater sense of depth, air and space – especially whilst using a high-quality linear power supply

to the Ethernet Media Converter. The guitars and especially percussion felt like they were being played live, with greater separation, definition and crisper, more airy highs and tighter, punchier more textured bass. If you own a LUMİN P1 (or X1) this is the way to go and is a no-brainer upgrade.



I connected my 4K streaming Apple TV via HDMI to the P1 and then the P1 to the ARC input on my TV. Content from Netflix, Disney+ and Prime etc. came through with enjoyable results. I don't use a subwoofer, but it wasn't missed due to the full range capability of the system. The sound was detailed and dynamic, with dialogue easily

understandable and the musical score of movies becoming more engaging and theatrical. It's a useful addition or option, especially with the supplied remote control.

I ran the P1 into an assortment of integrated amplifiers, including the [Gryphon](#) Diablo 250, and used the amplifier's volume control – but had to try LUMiN's 'Leedh Processing' lossless volume control too. I am happy to report more sparkle, harmonic richness and colour by bypassing the preamplifier and using the P1 directly into a power amplifier. There was a better sense of micro-detail, decay and naturalness. Although common wisdom says that a system will always sound better with a preamplifier between your source and power amplifier, the LUMiN P1 proved an exception to this rule.



THE VERDICT



The LUMiN P1's great strength comes from its ability to be used in so many different ways, and with each combination, the quality and depth of engineering are self-evident. Its classy styling, solid build, ease of use and stability under all conditions will resonate with you long after the installation. And with ongoing software support by the manufacturer, there's no need for anxiety that your investment will be left behind. As a streaming DAC, it has no weaknesses and holds its head high amongst its peers.

[For more information visit LUMiN](#)