



Amplifier construction art in Korean: the Waversa Wslim Lite reminds in height and quality of the ingenious Devialet amplifiers, but at 1,750 Euros it is much cheaper (Photo: F. Borowski)

Test integrated amplifier Waversa Wslim LITE: as smart as hardly any other

[Frank Borowski](#) 19. July 2020

The Korean manufacturer Waversa is still a largely unknown quantity on the local high-end stage, but has some highly ambitious solutions in its range. For example, a router for over 5,000 Euros or a tube phono stage for over 10,000 Euros. In addition, there is the ultra-flat and very practical Waversa Wslim LITE digital amplifier. It looks extraordinary, sounds the same and is affordable. **LowBeats** has tested the hip flask extensively and is quite impressed...

The English word "smart" is often hawked around these days, because its meaning can be interpreted in many ways. Not only people are (sometimes) smart. If the industry has its way, more and more cars, household appliances and even loudspeakers will be smart. Either because there is some kind of "AI" software in it, or just a voice control assistant. However, both in the classic sense of the word are rather stupid. We are still many light years away from real artificial intelligence (self-thinking, self-confident and really smart).



Flat and minimalist: the Waversa Wslim LITE (Photo: F. Borowski)

What, for example, would smart hi-fi be? Well, I'm sure everyone has their own interpretation. For me, these are components such as the **DAC/power amp combination from Exogal**. It's not only technically extremely innovative, but also sounds fantastic, is wonderfully compact and at the same time has an amazingly high output, while at the same time being frugal and easy to connect. In my opinion, there should be much more of this type. The Waversa Wslim LITE hits exactly the same mark in many areas.

Within Waversa's rather extensive product range, the Wslim LITE is something of an entry point into the rather highbrow world of South Korea. For around 1,700 Euros you can get a DAC with integrated amplifier, a DLNA, Roon Ready, AirPlay network player, Bluetooth receiver and an FM tuner (yes, FM!). The whole thing is nicely packaged in a flat aluminium case milled from solid aluminium roughly the size of a MacBook Air, which with its recessed display is somehow reminiscent of a personal scale - for people with very small feet.

The many technical details like the completely digital, FPGA-based signal processing and the so-called PPBTL amplifiers (Para-Para-Bridge-Tied Load), or the special features of WAP (Waversa Audio Processor) and WNDR (Waversa Network Direct Rendering) are things I don't want to go into too much detail about at this point. [The German Waversa distributor ATR has already summarized this on their website in a very detailed and easy to understand way.](#) Instead I would like to concentrate more on the practical aspects.

The structure of the Waversa Wslim LITE

The joy about the super slim case gets a little dampened when unpacking, as there is also an external block power supply in a neat format in the box, which isn't mentioned anywhere in the description. It wants to be hidden somewhere behind the shelf. It is a 240 W switching power supply for laptops. Which is no criticism. To develop powerful power supplies yourself and to certify them worldwide is very expensive. Given the special design of the Wslim LITE and its price, a proven standard power supply makes perfect sense.



Very cute: The Waversa Wslim LITE is flat and handy like a notebook (Photo: Waversa)

On the top of the front panel of the Waversa Wslim LITE, six flat aluminium buttons are recessed for direct control of all amp functions. An Apple Remote is included for remote control. Not the worst choice, because the remote control from the iPhone manufacturer is a perfect match for the Waversa, has a high-quality finish, is discreet (no logo) and offers complete control of the amp with just a few buttons.

A special app from the manufacturer is not currently available for the Wslim. Which in my opinion is not a problem. For UPnP control via iDevice, established third party apps like [mconnect](#) can be used. Or of course **Roon**. Nevertheless, South Korea is now also working on an in-house app. But when this will be released is still in the pipeline.

At the center of the front area, a small but easily readable display is embedded in the massive aluminum upper shell at a slight angle. The shape of the case, the mounting of the display and the fact that there are slots for screws for wall mounting on the back are somewhat reminiscent of the Devialet amps of the Expert series. However, the idea of wall mounting does not seem to have been thought through to the end with the Wslim. Mounted on the wall with the connectors facing down, the display is upside down. It cannot be turned. But when I asked the sales department, they confirmed that Waversa is working on a software solution, which will be added via firmware update.



The small but high resolution and easy to read display. The strip on the left edge shows the playback status with colored codes. The "eyes" on the left and right are the IR receiver (Photo: F. Borowski)

By the way: Customers can carry out updates themselves quite comfortably. To do so, the web interface of the Wslim must be accessed via a web browser by entering the IP address (can be shown in the display).

A look at the back reveals this: The little Waversa wants to be fed exclusively digitally. No analog inputs available. Instead Ethernet for playback over the network, 2 x USB (one socket for a mass storage device or a WLAN adapter, and the other for connection to Mac/PC with max. 24 Bit/384kHz). S/PDIF optical and electrical are the possible wired playback options. Music can be beamed into the hip flask via Bluetooth (aptX) without a strip. A connection for a stub antenna is provided on the back. WLAN is deliberately not on board, but can be retrofitted with a dongle on the USB-A socket if required, which is then no longer available for mass storage. But in this respect I'm definitely with Waversa: LAN is preferable from a sound point of view and in terms of reliability.

Another socket allows the connection of an FM antenna. As already mentioned, the Wslim is equipped with the almost forgotten but still possible method of terrestrial radio reception. To get ahead of the question: No, DAB+ is not on board. However, the analogue, frequency-modulated radio signals are first digitised in the Wslim before further processing. Last but not least, two pairs of solid loudspeaker terminals dominate the rear panel on the far left and right.

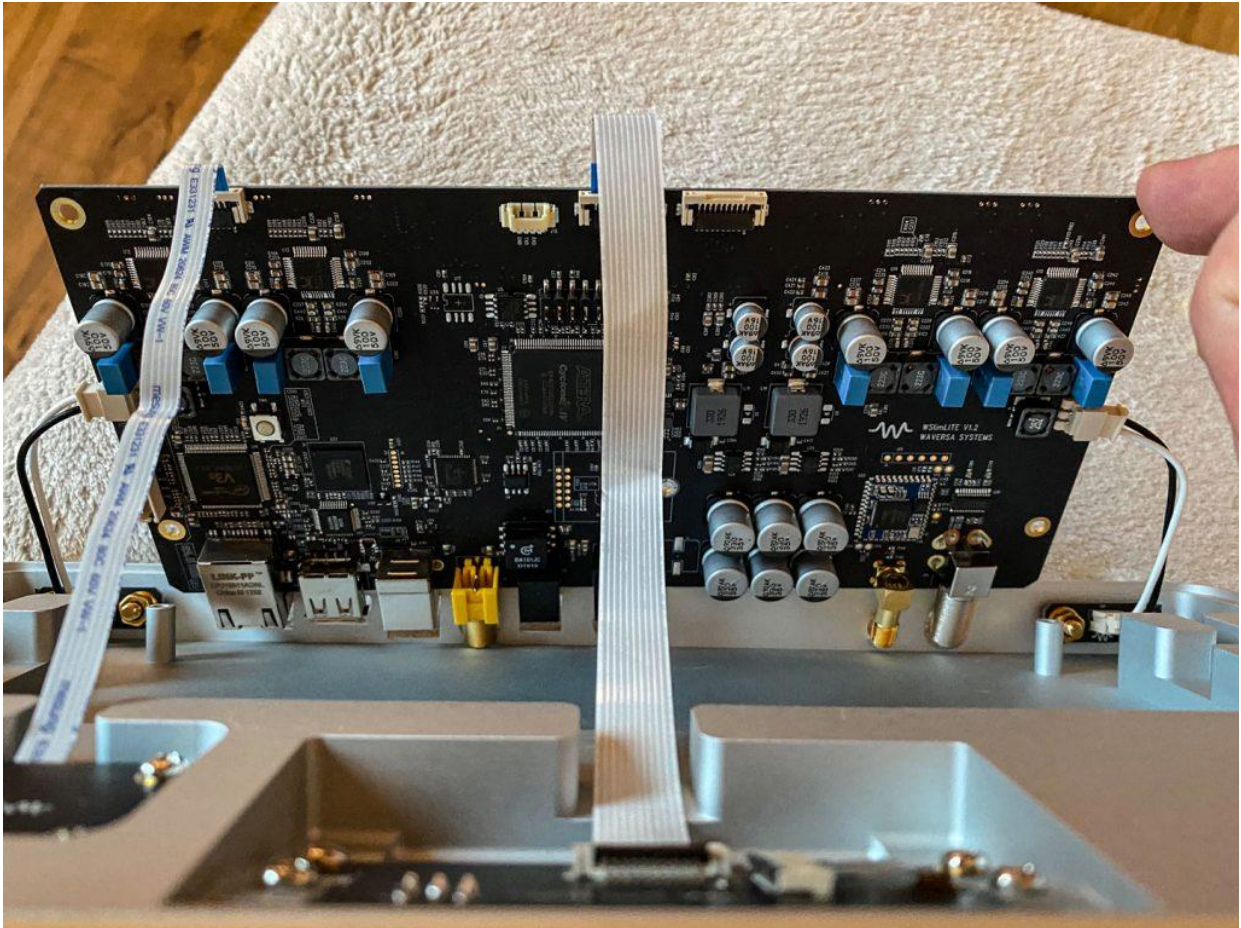


The connection and bottom side with the slots for wall mounting (photo: F. Borowski)

When looking through the technical data, eyebrows will involuntarily raise: Only 2 x 40 W at 4 Ohm? Isn't that a bit low for a "digital amplifier"? No. And forget about the watt specification again, because it is relative on the Wslim LITE. Its exceptional low output impedance circuitry is very stable under load and can deliver quite a bit of power, depending on the power supply (which is not without reason quite powerful at 24V, 10A).

The eight alternating and parallel normal- and inverse-phase output amplifier modules can be individually adjusted in their amplification factor. A menu function provides the user with six stages to adapt the amp to low-efficiency (quieter) loudspeakers, for example, and to make the best possible use of the volume control.

The Wslim had no problems whatsoever with the listening test speakers we connected. Even the Børresen 02 floorstanding loudspeakers, which are blessed with low efficiency, were driven up to high volumes. This meant that extreme levels were no longer advisable, but the performance is absolutely amazing for an amp of this size and with these performance figures. You simply don't expect that from such a small box.



The highly integrated mainboard is packed with chips. The loudspeaker terminals are connected directly to the motherboard with short, comparatively thin strips (Photo: F. Borowski)

But before I come to the sound chapter, I would like to say a few words about some of the Korean's other special features. Waversa is not only a company specializing in digital audio, but also has a penchant for true analog sound and tubes, as evidenced by the various tube-equipped high-end amplifiers, phono preamps and DACs in its product line.

Although the Waversa Wslim LITE is not equipped with tubes, it is said to be able to reconstruct their famous sonic characteristics perfectly. To be more precise: especially the sound of 300B tubes. So the Koreans have developed a circuit that simulates a bit of tube clang on the harmonics; this should come closer to our natural hearing sensation. This function is called WAP/X and can be turned on and off in the menu.

The Wslim LITE's small size also makes it ideal for desktop use. Anyone who uses top-quality passive loudspeakers at close range and wants to enjoy them while working in front of a computer screen will hardly find a more compact solution with comparable sound characteristics. It is also a pleasure to operate the device using the keys within easy reach. In this case, the remote control can disappear into the drawer.

Hearing test: no touch of "digital"

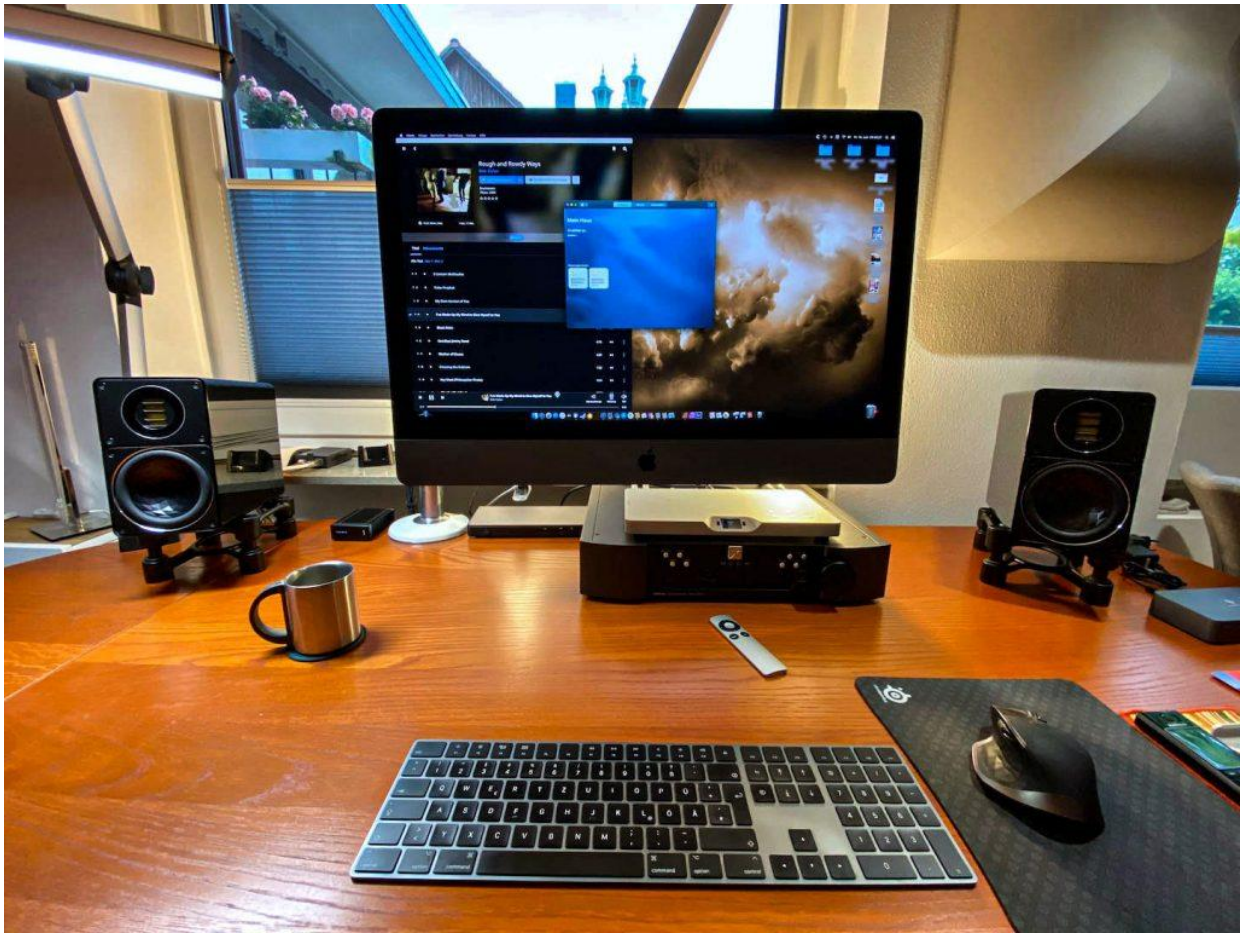
In order to be able to concretely locate the tonal/musical characteristics, the Wslim first had to compete against my Exogal measurement barrier, which had been unchallenged up to now, which - for the sake of fairness - is again considerably more expensive. Here it became immediately clear that the Wslim is most likely to lack spatial selectivity. The stage image was spacious and open, but could not keep up with the clarity and three-dimensionality of the US Comet and Ion PowerDAC combination. The Wslim also lacked last reserves in the bass. So the trees don't grow into the sky here.

Nevertheless, the Wslim LITE sounds perfectly analog and yet exceptionally smooth - without swallowing up any details. What's striking is the high joy of playing, the verve and the openness with which the Korean can set himself apart from many switching amplifiers - such as those from NAD. But the Waversa also sets itself apart in this comparison in terms of rough dynamics with astonishing punch and depth. Where does it get the energy for that? With the Wslim, the whole action appears fuller and more confident and with lifelike coloration, without lacking control.



On the **Trinnov Amethyst** you see how small the Wslim is. Its footprint is similar to that of the Exogal components (black devices), but it is flat as a flounder and combines streaming, DAC, preamplifier and power amplifier in one housing (Photo: F. Borowski)

With additionally activated WAP/X switching, the sound image gains a little more airiness. However, this is accompanied by somewhat more rounded impulses. The effect was understandable, but not huge within my chain. And I honestly could not decide clearly for or against WAP/X. I guess it is simply a matter of taste. Still, it's nice that Waversa offers such a possibility here.



Also ideal for the desktop: The Waversa Wslim LITE here on the back of the **Moon 430 HAD** headphone amplifier in the normal 43cm HiFi grid. By the way: Unfortunately, the little one does not have a headphone output (photo: F. Borowski)

Conclusion on Waversa Wslim LITE: a pleasantly uncomplicated surprise

Original, minimalist, small, finely crafted, super easy to use and yet versatile, as well as great sound quality. That fits! With its design and dimensions, the Waversa Wslim LITE fits perfectly on any media rack, but also easily on the desktop. In addition to the power supply, USB and two speaker cables for passive speakers, this makes for a wonderfully minimalist system for friends of near-field sound reinforcement. Whether in the studio or simply for all those who want to enjoy the finest stereo sound while working on the screen or while playing with their friends. And maybe you'll soon be able to mount it on the wall too...

With the Wslim LITE, Waversa has not only rounded off its product range. The Korean company has an original and unusual integrated amplifier that is aimed at those who are tired of the usual hi-fi monotony and want something new both visually and sonically. But it is not simply fashionable and exotic. Even from a high-fidelity point of view we have to attest that the hip flask has an excellent price/performance ratio. With its warm, silky-smooth sound it gives you an appetite for much more high end miniaturized designs. If so much comes out of it every time...



Outstanding

KLANG

PRACTICAL

PROCESSING

TOTAL

The valuation always refers to the respective price class.

- Y** Warm, dynamic and lively sound. At the push of a button even "roaring"
- Y** Easy installation and operation
- Y** Elegant, compact-flat design, with wall mounting possible
- ⚡** No headphone output, no analog inputs

Distribution:

ATR – Audio Trade

Schenkendorfstraße 29

45472 Mülheim an der Ruhr

www.audiotra.de

Price (manufacturer's recommendation)

Waversa Wslim LITE: 1.750 Euro