ADOT MC01 Kit 2 fibre/ ethernet conversion kit

by Jason Kennedy

A t a glance, this fibre conversion kit from Melco distributor ADMM looks like a tricky sell. There are numerous fibre to ethernet (media) converters on the market and most of them look like the ADOT MC01, except for one important detail; this one has four dipswitches at the 'other' end (the end you don't see in most pictures) and these allow speed throttling down from the gigabit required for computer networks to 100Mbs, which is more than sufficient for audio signals. Fibre has a number of advantages on its own, but by slowing down the speed of operation ADOT adds another means of reducing noise... which usually means a reduction in perceived distortion in the eventual analogue signal.

The MC01 kits that ADOT sells are designed to make it easy for audio enthusiasts – as opposed to network engineers – to break the electrical chain between a domestic router or network and the audio system. Ethernet is marvellous stuff at sharing noise on a network, whether its created by the router itself or any of the devices using it, and ADOT has produced some impressive looking graphics to show how ▶

"It's a simple installation process and the point of these ADOT kits is that they provide all the elements required to finish the job."
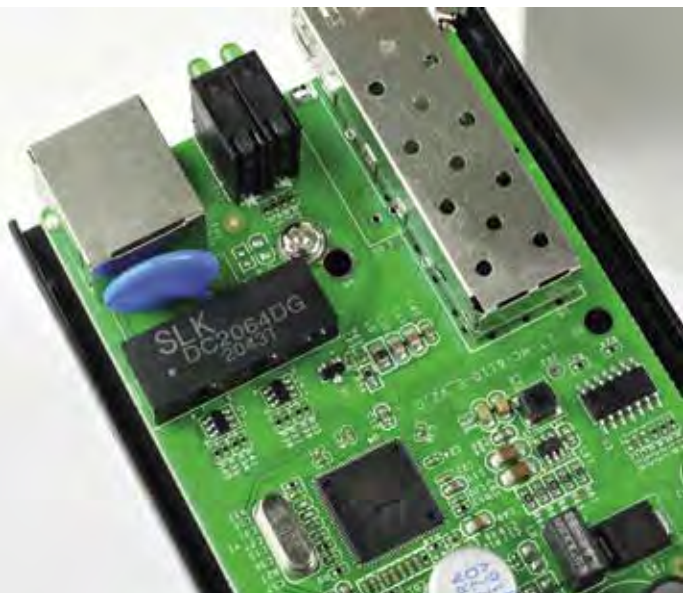

▶ much noise and jitter its systems can remove. There are several advantages to a media converter such as the MC01, including galvanic isolation (which always reduces noise) and the fact that it reconstructs the signal at the receiver which reduces jitter.

There are two ways of using fibre in a streaming set up. The first requires two media converters with the ethernet from the switch or router connecting to the first where it's converted to an optical signal and sent down the fibre to the second MC01 and converted back to ethernet. You connect that output to your streamer or server/hard drive. That arrangement requires two MC01s. The other option is to use a network switch with an SFP port for the fibre; Melco's S100 switch has this but so do many others. In this situation, you connect the media converter to the switch with fibre then convert to ethernet for the final connection to the audio equipment.

It's a simple installation process and the point of the ADOT kits is that they provide all the elements required to finish the job. These consist of the MC01 convertor, an SFP adapter that allows the fibre cable to connect to the media convertor, the cable itself and a power supply for the MC01. ADOT has selected the best performing examples of each element and offers a range of power supply options in its three kits. Kit 1 comes with a switched mode plug-top supply, Kit 2 gets a linear plug top with EI transformer and Kit 3 comes with a rather more serious Plixir 5V supply in its own rather smart case. The fourth option is a single MC01 for use with one of these kits; fortunately a divider is provided so that a single power supply can feed two converters.

My fun with the MC01 Kit 2 started when I had to figure out how to connect a 1.2m run of fibre to the media convertor using an SFP adapter, which really isn't complicated once ▶

"The ADOT fibre kit brought an upgrade to my system better than achieved with a network switch."

▶ you have removed all the protective caps and covers and established which way up the plug needs to be. That done I got the second MC01 out of its anti-static bag and connected it to the other end of the fibre, powering both with the chunky plug-top linear power supply and connecting the first to the network switch and the second to an Innuos Zenith SE music server, the signal then went directly from there to the Aqua LinQ streamer reviewed last month. The effect on what was already a very good streaming source was a relaxation of the sound that allowed the image to fall back from the speakers and give a degree of perspective that was previously missing. It did this without undermining timing; in fact, the melodic aspect of the music seemed to be increased. There is a sense of cleaning up, as if a previously undetected grunginess was removed to leave notes pristine, warm and fluent.

Bypassing the streamer and taking a USB feed directly to the Aqua La Scala MkII DAC did the same thing but clearly improved the sense of timing in the process, opening up Gil Scott-Heron's 'New York is Killing Me' [*I'm New Here*, XL] and revealing it to be a rather better recording that appeared to be the case before. There is a distinct removal of time smear which means that notes stop and start in cleaner fashion and the spaces in between are better defined. Both of these examples were heard when playing music stored on the Innuos server, no music was travelling through the fibre, but the link to the network and eventually the rest of the world (WAN) is a conduit for noise and breaking it clearly allows the audio equipment to do a better job.

When streaming from Qobuz the benefits of the fibre are broadly similar but there is a greater sense of openness in the presentation and with it greater clarity, contrast and subtlety. All of which combines to produce a result that is closer to analogue than can usually be achieved with streaming services; it's arguably not as good as locally stored music but good enough to enjoy at a proper volume level. The sense of timing is clearly enhanced once more and 'Can't You Hear Me Knocking' [Rolling Stones, *Sticky Fingers*, Virgin] has real groove, that searing riff really does the business. Finally, I was able to try using a single MC01 with an SOtM network switch with an SFP connection, this did much the same as the twin MC01 arrangement with a clear increase in clarity but added to the dynamic impact as well; again this was with locally stored material.

The ADOT fibre kit brought an upgrade to my system better than achieved with a network switch at the same price. It delivers greater transparency and resolution from the streaming system regardless of music source. Results will vary with situation, but from where I sit 'this is a definite contribution to road safety', which – for those not well-dipped in 1980s British TV nostalgia – translates to "it works damn well". ✛

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Type: fibre/ethernet conversion kit

In/outputs: SFP, RJ45

Power supply: plug-top linear 5V, 1A

Accessories: 1.5m fibre cable, SFP adapter

Size H×W×D: 25 × 68 × 92mm

Weight: 207g

Warranty: 2 years

Price: MC01 Kit 2 £399
      Single MCO1 converter £179
      ADOT fibre optic cable: from £20

Manufacturer: ADMM

Tel: 01252 784525

URL: www.audiophiledigital.co.uk