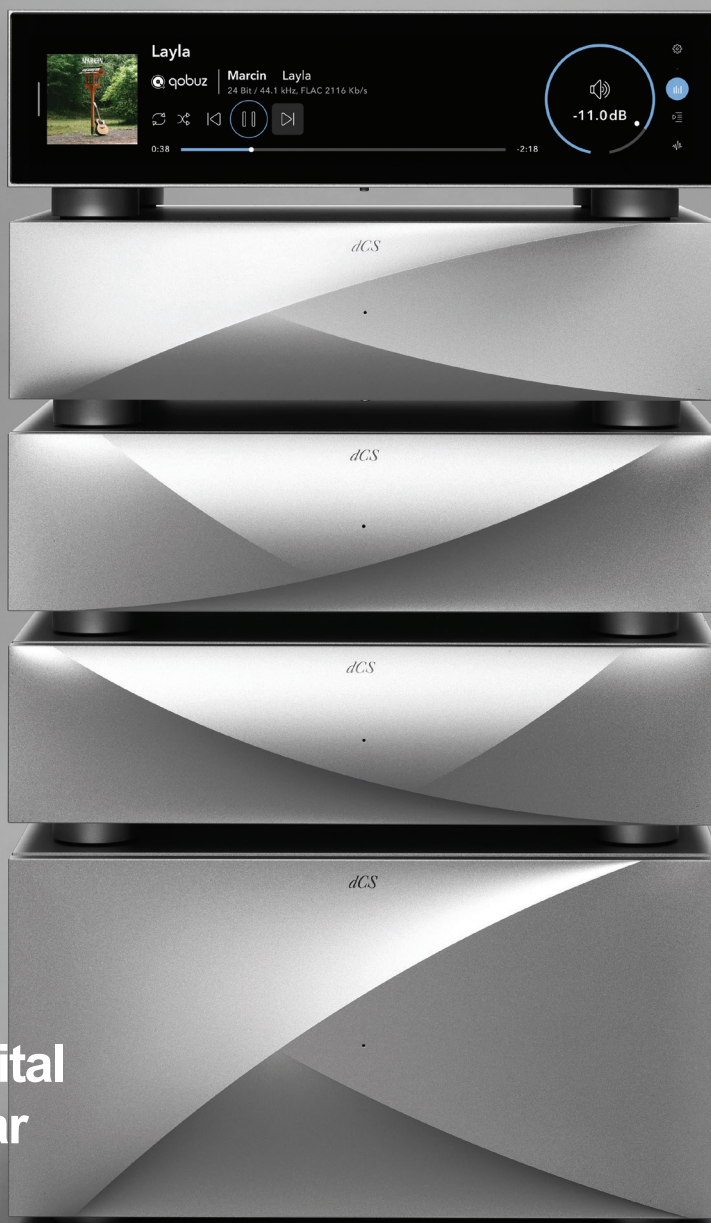


# Product of the Year Awards



## Music Server/Digital Source of the Year

dCS Varèse  
\$254,000

The British company dCS has been on the cutting edge of digital reproduction for decades. For its new flagship, the Varèse, named after the pioneering French-American composer Edgar Varèse, dCS has once more upped its game—and not by a small margin. The Varèse not only boasts a wealth of new technological approaches but also sounds fundamentally better than its predecessors. The first and most important change is that dCS has created a CORE unit that controls the mono DACs, word clock, and transport with a single cable rather than the welter of wires that previously snaked behind its products. The CORE assumes many of the tasks—upsampling, filtering, and format conversions—that were previously executed by the DAC, thereby simplifying and improving its performance. In addition, the CORE supports most hi-res formats and most streaming services.

The result is a digital breakthrough. The Varèse produces a vast soundstage that is filled with images that have a 3-D feel to them. Some of this sonic intensity can be ascribed to the superb bass control of the Varèse, which endows the entire frequency spectrum with an invitingly rich sound. So great is the wealth of detail that the Varèse offers that this richness never camouflages or masks transients. Instead, it peels back layer after layer to reveal the emotional center of digitally recorded music. That it is done with such finesse and aplomb only adds to the enduring charms of the Varèse. (359)