

Audiolab M-DAC

£500 ★★★★★

The M-DAC has been eagerly awaited. Audiolab's standalone DAC has been the missing piece in its arsenal for some time. It certainly looks smart enough (it's all relative) and scores well for connectivity. Alongside the USB input you'll find two digital optical and two digital coaxial inputs, while you can choose from optical, coaxial, RCA and balanced XLR audio outputs.

A dynamic and agile sound

A wand-like remote control allows you to switch inputs, select from preset sonic filters and alter the display. The large, clear screen allows you to see what input you're using and the sample rate being received.

The M-DAC deals happily with hi-res 24-bit/192kHz files via the coaxial input, but is limited to 24/96 over optical and USB.

The real talking point here, though, is just how good this unit makes your music sound. Like a sportsman at the top of his game, this Audiolab

makes the job in hand seem easy. There's bags of detail, stirring dynamics and an exciting agility to the delivery.

A WAV file of Hans Zimmer's *Time from the Inception* soundtrack delivers masses of information to process, but the sound remains precise and controlled.

This is one of those products that has you reaching to play all your favourite tracks to hear just how good they can sound.

Capable of revealing weight to bass notes yet light and fast on its feet, the M-DAC is hugely capable. We urge you to find out what it could do for your system.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Solid build, smart styling; supports 24-bit/192kHz; thorough selection of connections; sounds superb

AGAINST Nothing of note

VERDICT Well worth the wait, the M-DAC has raised the performance bar with apparent ease



TOP TIP

You ought to make the most of the M-DAC's quality by investigating HD audio. Linn Records and HDtracks.com are two good places to start