

PRESS RELEASE

audiolab

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Press Contact: Tim Bown

020 8654 8945

07854 966071

tim@andygilesassociates.co.uk

+44 (0)1480 447700

www.audiolab.co.uk



Above: Audiolab M-DAC+ in silver finish option

Top DAC! The best just got better...

Audiolab upgrades the hugely successful M-DAC to create a premium version of the UK's favourite high-performance, multipurpose DAC

Cambridgeshire, England -- Audiolab, one of Britain's most revered audio brands, launches the hotly anticipated premium version of the much-lauded M-DAC this month. The new M-DAC+ will sell alongside the classic M-DAC, sporting a number of enhancements both inside and out in return for an additional £200.

Like the M-DAC, the new M-DAC+ is a high-performance, multipurpose audio DAC (Digital-to-Analogue Converter) for home use, designed to sit on a desk or table, or integrate into a hi-fi system. It incorporates a highly specified, audiophile-quality digital preamp and Class A output stage for connection to a power amp and speakers (the output can be fixed for use with an existing preamp or integrated amp). A high-quality headphone output is also provided.

DAC's the way to do it

All digital music signals need to be converted to analogue and amplified in order to drive speakers or headphones; the conversion process from digital to analogue is a critical part of any digital audio playback device or system. The purpose of an off-board DAC component like the classic M-DAC or new M-DAC+ is to greatly enhance the sound quality of digital music, whether streamed or stored locally on a computer, smartphone or tablet, or played from any other digital audio device such as a CD player.

The new M-DAC+ is based firmly on the classic M-DAC, with carefully targeted improvements in key areas – a logical move, given the original model's sustained popularity over the last four years. The M-DAC built a peerless reputation with press and public alike since its launch in the autumn of 2011, scooping multiple product of the year awards from the likes of *What Hi-Fi?*, *Hi-Fi Choice* and *EISA* to make it arguably the most widely acclaimed DAC component ever made.

Like the M-DAC, the M-DAC+ is built around the ESS Sabre32 9018, a 32-bit DAC chipset that continues to have a reputation as the finest available for stereo applications. This is surrounded by exceptionally well-specified circuitry that puts other similarly priced DACs to shame, including a proprietary, discrete master clock to minimise jitter, coupled with extensive time domain isolation. A JFET Class A output stage ensures that the audio signal, following conversion from the digital domain to analogue, is of the highest quality.

When the M-DAC launched, experts and rivals examined its circuitry and marvelled, "How can Audiolab make such a highly specified high-end DAC and sell it for just £600?" Similar questions will be asked of the M-DAC+; it takes everything that makes the M-DAC a classic 'affordable high-end' audio component and delivers significant enhancements in return for a modest £200 premium, further securing the M-DAC family's position at the top of the sub-£1000 DAC class.

Enhancing a classic

Compared to the classic M-DAC, the most immediately obvious change is to the aluminium case and control scheme. The M-DAC+ features a new chassis, with the OLED display window now centrally positioned and rounded at the sides, in keeping with Audiolab's recently launched 8300 Series components. The display is flanked by two rotary controls, one to adjust volume and the other to select settings, replacing the buttons found on the classic M-DAC. Not only does this add to the cleaner, softer and more modern aesthetic, it also makes the M-DAC+ simpler to use when accessing its many features and facilities.

Under the hood lie a number of performance-related enhancements. The M-DAC+ now processes audio data up to 32-bit/384kHz via USB; this is a far higher specification than that required by current hi-res music formats, ensuring this new, premium-quality addition to the M-DAC family is fully equipped for future advances in ultra-high-definition digital sound.

The USB input now also supports DSD files (the digital audio system originally developed for Super Audio CD), offering compatibility with DSD64, DSD128 and DSD256. This is a significant addition, as DSD has an important role to play in the developing high-resolution downloading and streaming scene.

As digital audio technology has progressed, the importance of the characteristics of reconstruction digital filters has become more appreciated. Like the classic M-DAC, the M-DAC+ features user-selectable filters for optimal listening and measurement modes, in addition to more conventional types for easy comparison. These filter settings allow the user to tune performance to suit his or her preference, depending on system configuration, digital file quality and musical taste. The M-DAC+ inherits seven filter settings from the M-DAC for PCM files and adds four more for DSD playback, allowing the user to optimise the noise floor to suit the performance of the source file and the bandwidth of associated equipment such as amps and speakers.

The updated digital processing associated with the increased resolution at the M-DAC+'s USB input delivers additional sonic benefits, whatever the resolution of the file. In advancing the capability of the USB input to include files of up to 32-bit/384kHz, the processing of data preceding and within the Sabre DAC has increased the subjective resolution of musical detail and dynamics, resulting in an even more engaging and transparent performance that sets a new standard for sub-£1000 DACs.

Another important change relates to the power supply, which has been upgraded and is now fully incorporated within the M-DAC+'s chassis (hence its slightly taller and deeper case compared to the classic M-DAC). A precision-wound toroidal transformer uses multiple windings to feed separate analogue and digital rectification stages. From there, multiple power supply sections feed the necessary voltages to each area of the DAC, keeping any crossover interference to a minimum. The result is the highest performance power supply Audiolab engineers have yet specified for a DAC, and its contribution to the M-DAC+'s enhanced sonic performance is significant.

Around the back, digital input options have been expanded with an AES/EBU socket and an additional USB Type A input – ideal for connecting Apple devices – alongside the existing USB Type B connection. These join a full complement of inputs/outputs retained from the classic M-DAC: 2x coaxial digital inputs; 2x optical digital inputs; 1x coaxial digital output; 1x optical digital output; single-ended RCA and balanced XLR analogue outputs; 12V trigger loop.

The Audiolab M-DAC+ comes with a redesigned remote control and is available in black or silver from late-January 2016, at an RRP of £799.95. The classic M-DAC continues at £599.95.

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specifications

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|-----------------------------------|---|
| General description | Digital-to-Analogue Converter |
| DAC | ESS Sabre32 9018 chip |
| Sampling Rate | 24-bit / 192kHz (Optical, Coaxial, AES) 32-bit / 384kHz (USB) 2.8MHz (DSD64), 5.6MHz (DSD128), 11.2MHz (DSD256) |
| Digital Input | 2 x Coaxial, 2 x Toslink Optical, 1 x AES/EBU, 1 x USB for PC USB, 1x USB for iPod/iPhone/iPad |
| Digital Output | 1x Coaxial, 1 x Toslink Optical |
| Output Voltage | Balanced: 4.5Vrms ±0.1 Unbalanced: 2.25Vrms ±0.1 |
| Output Impedance | 10Ω |
| THD (1kHz 0dB 20Hz - 20kHz A wtd) | <0.002% |
| Frequency Response | 20Hz - 20KHz (± 0.2dB) |
| Signal-to-Noise ratio A wtd | RCA: >115dB, XLR: >120dB |
| Dynamic Range A wtd | RCA: > 115dB, XLR: > 120dB |
| Crosstalk @ 1k | RCA: <-120dB , XLR: <-130dB |
| Dimensions (mm) | 114mm x 247mm x 292mm |
| Net Weight | 3.7kg |

audiolab

Formed in the early 1980s by Philip Swift and Derek Scotland, Audiolab earned worldwide acclaim with the 8000A – an integrated stereo amplifier that became a classic ‘step-up’ from the budget models of the time. During the ensuing years, the 8000A established itself as one of the most successful British amps ever produced, and was joined by a range of electronics including CD players, pre/power amps and an FM tuner. The brand switched hands in 1997, changing its name to TAG McLaren Audio; and so it was known until 2004, when Audiolab became part of the International Audio Group and returned to its original name.

Audiolab introduced the full-width 8200 Series components in 2010, combining the company’s original ethos of simple, well-constructed ergonomics and crisp, transparent sound with innovative, performance-led design concepts. The quality of these components, in tandem with the now-legendary M-DAC and its siblings from the compact LAB Series, earned Audiolab more awards in the UK press between 2010 and 2015 than any other brand of high-performance audio electronics. 2016 sees the next major evolutionary phase in Audiolab’s story, as the new 8300 Series and M-DAC+ propel the brand to even greater heights.

www.audiolab.co.uk

IAG

IAG (International Audio Group) is a manufacturer of audio equipment for domestic and professional use, plus professional lighting systems and luxury yachts. With its headquarters and manufacturing facilities in Asia and offices (including R&D) in the UK and North America, IAG is a manufacturer with a truly global reach.

IAG’s audio business employs more than 2,000 people worldwide. Its factory complex in China is one of the largest custom-designed consumer electronics manufacturing facilities in the world and benefits from an exceptional level of vertical integration, with all component parts – even the tooling – made in-house. The Group’s domestic audio brands – Audiolab, Castle Acoustics, Luxman, Mission, Quad and Wharfedale – all enjoy a worldwide reputation for excellence, with illustrious histories that stretch back decades. Top-class British audio engineering remains critical to these brands, with world-renowned designer Peter Comeau leading an acoustic design team brimming with international talent.

The combination of rich brand heritage, purpose-built production facilities in China and experienced audio engineers from around the globe makes IAG a unique proposition in the world of consumer electronics.

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For more information, product samples or high-resolution images, please contact Tim Bowern
T: 020 8654 8945 M: 07854 966071 E: tim@andygilesassociates.co.uk
