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Above: Audiolab M-EAR 4D

Little M-EARs deliver BIG music

Audiolab's first headphones – the M-EAR 2D and M-EAR 4D – are in-ear monitors that combine multiple balanced armature drivers to thrilling musical effect

Cambridgeshire, England – Two celebrated names from the UK audio scene – Audiolab and ACS – have teamed up to deliver a range of British-made, multi-driver in-ear monitors called Audiolab M-EAR.

The M-EAR 2D (£429.95) is a two-way, two-driver design, with one driver handling mid/high frequencies and the other dedicated to bass. The M-EAR 4D (£699.95) is a three-way design sporting four drivers – one for high frequencies, another for midrange and two for bass.

Both M-EAR models incorporate balanced armature drivers, which differ from the dynamic drivers found in most headphones and earphones. These drivers use an electronic signal to vibrate a tiny reed suspended between two magnets; this movement is transferred to an aluminium diaphragm, thus generating soundwaves. Balanced armature drivers deliver greater efficiency and are extremely compact, enabling several drivers to be combined in small, sound-isolating in-ear monitors, and the sound they produce is fast, open and detailed.

Collaborate to innovate

Audiolab is best known for its DACs (digital-to-analogue converters), CD players and amplifiers, so the development of in-ear monitors (IEMs) is something of a departure for the brand. To meet the challenge, Audiolab approached ACS – a world-leader in the design and manufacture of in-ear monitors.

Founded more than 20 years ago by musician Andy Shiach, ACS has a huge reputation in the ‘pro’ world that stretches across live music, broadcasting, motorsports and more. The company’s custom-made in-ear comms and hearing protection equipment is used by a host of big names, from Little Mix to U2, The X Factor to Formula 1.

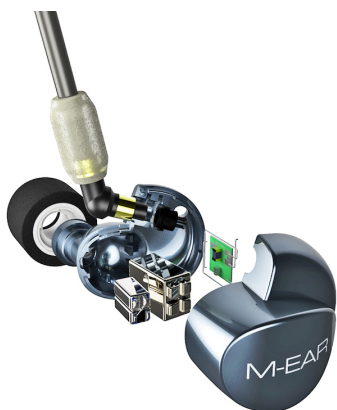
10 years ago, ACS extended its offering with a range of high-end in-ear monitors for consumers, garnering rave reviews across the board. The Audiolab M-EAR range represents the latest generation of ACS’s class-leading technologies, developed in collaboration with Audiolab’s design team to create universal-fit IEMs delivering true high-end performance at competitive price points.

A feast for your ears

Both M-EAR models feature ACS’s patent-pending IRIS (Intelligent Resonance In Silicone) technology, created to maximise the musical potential of balanced armature drivers. IRIS construction methods allow precise acoustic tuning, fusing the crisp, open detail that characterises high-performance balanced armature IEMs with a musical warmth and fluidity that other manufacturers fail to match. Additionally, the M-EAR 4D incorporates a ported balanced armature design for the bass drivers, with a cavity in the silicone that is precisely balanced to the driver – this is unique to ACS.

Another ACS feature integrated in both M-EAR models is SSI (Sound Stage Imaging) – a tuning technique derived from ACS’s purpose-designed manifold technology. This widens the soundstage and creates more space around individual instruments and voices, enhancing sonic definition and the feeling of being present at a live musical performance.

The result, in the case of the M-EAR 2D, is a pair of discreet IEMs delivering taut, punchy bass, captivating midrange clarity and crisp, clean high-frequency detail, with no harmonic interference. Invest in the M-EAR 4D and the sonic return is even greater space, scale and dynamic expression.



Left: Audiolab M-EAR 4D exploded view

Both M-EARs are supplied with a high-quality detachable cable, 1.45m in length. Left and right conductors are individually sheathed in aramid fibre – exceedingly durable yet lightweight – and twisted together to create a tough, tangle-resistant cable, which attaches to the IEMs via a five-pin connector. An in-line microphone is included for hands-free convenience when making calls, but this is no ordinary miniature mic – it is a Knowles SiSonic MEMS-based microphone, selected as a result of ACS’s pro-audio experience for excellent wide-band voice reproduction in noisy environments.

To ensure a snug fit and superb noise isolation, the M-EARs come with six pairs of ear tips in three different sizes. Developed by ACS and made from memory foam, they slowly form to the shape of the ear canal to separate the listener from outside noise whilst providing excellent comfort. Thanks to the reduction in ambient noise, musical detail remains crystal clear even at lower volume levels.

Speaking about his company’s collaboration with Audiolab, Andy Shiach said: “Our goal at ACS has always been to find the perfect balance between science and emotion. Musicians know what music should sound like, and our deep and broad experience of working across the music industry has enabled us to become the preferred manufacturer of in-ear monitors for many famous names. Having created Audiolab’s first-ever headphones in the form of the M-EAR in-ear monitors, we hope you agree that we have done this great British audio brand justice.”

The M-EAR 2D and M-EAR 4D are hand-made for Audiolab at ACS’s facility in Banbury, Oxfordshire. Both models are available from June and come complete with a zip-up carrying case and accessories.

Specifications	Audiolab M-EAR 2D	Audiolab M-EAR 4D
Driver configuration	2x balanced armature drivers	4x balanced armature drivers
Crossover	Two-way system	Three-way system
Noise isolation	-26dB	-26dB
Frequency response	20Hz-20kHz	20Hz-20kHz
Impedance	112 Ohms (@1kHz)	66 Ohms (@1kHz)
Output (sensitivity)	112dB @ 0.1V (1kHz)	115dB @ 0.1V (1kHz)
Cable	1.45m detachable	1.45m detachable
In-line microphone	SiSonic MEMS	SiSonic MEMS
Accessories	6x memory foam ear tips; carrying case	6x memory foam ear tips; carrying case
Weight	20g	20.5g
RRP (inc. VAT)	£429.95	£699.95

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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. Now part of the IAG brand family, Audiolab’s recent fame is largely derived from its hugely respected DAC circuitry, earning the company a plethora of awards since the launch of the 8200CD and M-DAC in 2010 and 2011 respectively. Today, the company continues to make highly acclaimed source and amp components – delivering crisp, clean ergonomics and sensational sound with everything from vinyl to the latest digital formats – as well as a range of high-performance in-ear monitors.

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