

## Press release

# audiolab

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*Above Audiolab D7 and D9 in silver finish*

## DAC's the way: the legacy continues...

**Audiolab unleashes two new standalone DACs, the D7 and D9, directly descended from the seminal M-DAC to enhance all manner of digital audio**

*Cambridgeshire, England* – Audiolab's track record of producing exceptional DACs stretches back more than 30 years. From the 8000DAC in the 1990s to 2011's all-conquering M-DAC and its successor the M-DAC+, the Cambridgeshire-based company's expertise in the field have led to a succession of class-leading devices, each expertly engineered to maximise the sound quality of all forms of digital audio.

While Audiolab has continued to refine the DAC (Digital-to-Analogue Converter) technology in its range of amps and streamers, eight years have passed since the company last launched a standalone DAC component. But, with the arrival of the D7 and D9, the next generation of Audiolab DACs is finally here.

Priced at £449 and £1099 respectively, the new DACs are direct descendants of the legendary M-DAC – a seminal device that swept aside all before it, remaining dominant in the DAC world for over half a decade. They build upon the same blueprint, honed over several generations of technical development.

Housed in a sturdy aluminium case measuring 180x56x208mm (WxHxD), the D7 is a compact DAC for home use delivering a performance that belies its accessible price point. The D9 is a larger device (albeit still smaller than a 'full width' hi-fi component) with dimensions of 315x88x277mm and

benefitting from the same technical, build and design qualities as Audiolab's top-tier 9000 Series amplification and streaming components.

Combining DAC, preamp and headphone amp functionality, both DACs are as accomplished at the heart of a high-performance hi-fi system as they are on a desk for headphone listening.

### **D7 and D9: Continuing the M-DAC's legacy**

A key part of the M-DAC's success was the use of ESS Technology's then new and groundbreaking Sabre32 Reference DAC technology. The first such chip – the ES9018 – was introduced in 2009, and the M-DAC was one of the very first DAC components to use it.



*Left Forebears of the D7 and D9: M-DAC (2011), M-DAC+ (2016) and M-DAC Mini (2017)*

When the M-DAC launched in 2011, it proved to be a revelation – not just owing to this innovative chipset but also because of the circuitry Audiolab designed around it. This ensured it made the most of the ES9018's attributes whilst eliminating the deleterious effects of sub-optimal implementation.

The range of Sabre DAC chipsets has since expanded and is now widely used by audio manufacturers, but these chips remain challenging to implement to achieve optimal performance. While they are capable of excellent resolution, products that use them can sound harsh or lacking warmth if sufficient care is not taken with the accompanying circuitry. Audiolab has more experience in working with these chips than any other manufacturer, giving the company a significant advantage.



*Left Available in silver or black, the new D7 is elegant on the outside and sophisticated within*

### **D7: A compact and affordable digital sound enhancer**

The D7 is based around the ES9038Q2M – a high-specification 32-bit Sabre DAC chip also utilised by Audiolab's 7000A and just-launched 6000A MkII integrated amplifiers. This is accompanied by proprietary circuitry to make the most of ESS Technology's HyperStream II architecture and Time Domain Jitter Eliminator for ultra-low noise and high dynamic range.

Proprietary clock and power supply circuitry elevates the DAC's performance, alongside a Class A post-DAC active filter – a critical element to the D7's sound quality. Hi-res audio support is state-of-the-

art, handling PCM to 32-bit/768kHz and DSD to 22.5792MHz (DSD512) via USB. Full MQA decoding is also included and the D7 is certified as 'Roon Tested' for use in a Roon audio environment.

Designed to perform as a high-quality digital audio 'hub', the D7 offers a versatile connectivity suite. Digital inputs include USB Type B to connect PCs, Macs and so on, and USB Type A for the direct connection of USB drives (content from such drives can be navigated via the D7's display). These are joined by four S/PDIF inputs – two optical and two coaxial.



*Left Despite its compact size, the D7 packs in an impressive connectivity suite at the rear*

Bluetooth is also included for convenient wireless reception from smartphones, tablets and the like, with support for multiple codecs including aptX HD, and Bluetooth 5.1 compliance for optimum range and speed. Listeners can opt to upsample digital audio data to 352.8kHz or 384kHz, while five DAC reconstruction filter settings allow listeners to adjust the sound to suit the source material – particularly useful given the variable quality of digital formats and streaming platforms.

Output options are also extensive, including balanced XLR and single-ended RCA on the analogue side, plus optical and coaxial digital outputs. Headphones are catered for by a 6.35mm socket, and two 12V trigger outputs can be used to power up/down connected devices in synchronicity with the D7.



*Left The D7's circuitry builds on Audiolab's long track record of developing class-leading DACs*

The analogue outputs can be used in fixed or variable mode. The former allows connection to integrated amps and preamps, with the amp controlling volume level, while the latter utilises the D7's precision, ultra-transparent volume control – this enables direct connection to a power amp or powered speakers. Those with suitably equipped amps reap the benefits of a balanced analogue signal chain, thanks to the DAC's differential balanced architecture and XLR outputs.

The physical layout of the D7's circuitry protects the audio signal from interference, enhanced by independent low-noise power supplies for all critical stages fed by an offboard PSU. This rigorous

attention to detail, complemented by tactile rotary controls and a crisp, monochrome OLED display, helps to deliver a combination of versatility and performance that outstrips the sub-£500 mains-powered DAC competition.



*Left Upgraded inside and out, the D9 launches as Audiolab's flagship standalone DAC*

### **D9: Impeccable design, superior performance**

The premium-level D9 raises the quality bar still further in every respect – build quality, facilities and, of course, sonic performance. Its affiliation with Audiolab's flagship 9000 Series hi-fi components is clear from the outset, with its crisply designed exterior and eye-catching colour display.

Technically, the D9 bears close comparison with Audiolab's 9000N music streamer (£2500), shorn of the onboard network streaming functionality but with everything else intact (plus Bluetooth added). At its heart lies the ES9038PRO – a pre-eminent DAC chip from the top tier of ESS Technology's current range.

While the ES9038Q2M used in the D7 is a two-channel chip, the 'PRO' version's architecture incorporates eight channels. The D9 utilises all eight of these to deliver a balanced stereo signal – four for the left and four for the right – realising further benefits in the eradication of noise and distortion. This combines with proprietary Audiolab circuitry including an ultra-precision master clock and Class A post-DAC filter to deliver remarkable sonic clarity and breathtaking dynamics.



*Left Premium design and build quality reflect the quality of engineering within the D9's aluminium chassis*

Like the D7, the D9's impeccable hi-res credentials encompass PCM to 32-bit/768kHz and DSD to 22.5MHz (DSD512). Every significant hi-res and lossless audio format is catered for, including FLAC, ALAC, AIFF, APE and WAV, as well as compressed legacy formats, alongside full MQA decoding. The same user-selectable upsampling and digital filter settings are provided, enabling the listener to tune the sound to suit the source material, and the D9 also has Roon Tested certification.

The D9's audio circuitry is significantly elevated, as befits its premium status. The post-DAC analogue circuitry incorporates top-grade components and differential balanced architecture for maximum signal purity. An expertly engineered linear power supply incorporates an ultra-low-noise toroidal transformer, delivering clean, consistent power to all the sensitive parts of the digital and analogue stages.

Multiple discrete ultra-low-noise regulators provide power separately to the left and right channels for each stage of the digital-to-analogue conversion process – a sophisticated topology born from Audiolab's experience of working with ESS Technology's reference-class Sabre DAC chips.



*Left While the D7's circuitry is very highly specified at its price point, the D9 takes things to a whole new level*

The D9's connectivity array adds an AES3/EBU digital input to the D7's complement of asynchronous USB-B, USB-A, two optical and two coaxial inputs. The D9's Bluetooth implementation adds support for Sony's LDAC high-definition format, alongside aptX HD, aptX Low Latency, regular aptX, AAC and SBC. Output options mirror the D7: balanced XLR and single-ended RCA (fixed and variable), plus optical and coaxial digital outputs, a 6.35mm headphone socket and a pair of 12V trigger outs.



*Left Extensive connectivity options ensure the D9 is at home in even the most high-end of audio applications*

Solidly built and impeccably finished, the D9's crisp lines are complemented by two rotary controls and a left-aligned 2.8in colour screen, mirroring Audiolab's top-tier, full-width 9000 Series components but in a more compact form. The screen displays a variety of information including volume level, input selection, track information and format data. Various other options include a VU-style meter showing real-time decibel levels; the display can also be simplified, dimmed or turned off completely, as the user prefers.

### **D7 and D9: Heavenly with headphones**

The D7 and D9 incorporate the same dedicated headphone amp circuitry, its current-feedback design, wide bandwidth, high slew rate and low output impedance delivering a spacious, detailed and dynamic performance with all manner of headphones – even tough loads that many DACs' headphone outputs struggle to drive.

The headphone amps in both DACs deliver up to 600mW of power across a load impedance range of 20 to 600 ohms. In other words, both the D7 and D9 are capable of driving virtually any pair of headphones, whether dynamic or planar, to seriously high volume levels – effortlessly and without a hint of distortion.



*Left The D7 (pictured) and D9 are as happy driving headphones as they are hooked up to an amp and speakers*

### **D7 and D9: Price and availability**

The Audiolab D7 and D9 are available from mid-May in a choice of silver or black, at RRP's of £449 and £1099 respectively.

**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 10:00 (GMT) ON FRIDAY 2 MAY 2025.**

SELECTED SPECIFICATIONS	AUDIOLAB D7	AUDIOLAB D9
DAC chipset	ES9038Q2M (32-bit, 2-channel)	ES9038PRO (32-bit, 8-channel)
Max. sampling frequency	768kHz PCM, DSD 512 (USB)	768kHz PCM, DSD 512 (USB)
Sound tuning options	2x upsampling; 5x digital filters	2x upsampling; 5x digital filters
Digital inputs	USB-B, USB-A, 2x optical, 2x coaxial	USB-B, USB-A, AES3/EBU, 2x optical, 2x coaxial
Bluetooth reception	Bluetooth 5.1 inc. aptX HD support	Bluetooth 5.1 inc. LDAC and aptX HD support
Audio outputs	Analogue: XLR, RCA; Digital: optical, coaxial	Analogue: XLR, RCA; Digital: optical, coaxial
Headphone output	6.35mm	6.35mm
Headphone amp impedance	Output: 2.35Ω; Load: 20-600Ω	Output: 2.35Ω; Load: 20-600Ω
Headphone amp max. power	600mW power; 4V voltage; 180mA current	600mW power; 4V voltage; 180mA current
DAC signal-to-noise ratio	XLR: 117dB; RCA: 115dB (A-weighted)	XLR: 123dB; RCA: 118dB (A-weighted)
Power supply circuitry	External PSU, independent power supplies	35VA transformer, multiple discrete regulators
Display	Monochrome OLED	2.8in colour IPS LCD; 9000 Series GUI
Dimensions (WxHxD)	180x56x208mm	315x88x277mm

# 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.

Since then, Audiolab's reputation has been further enhanced by its highly respected DAC circuitry, earning the company a plethora of awards throughout the last two decades.

Today, the company continues to make class-leading source and amp components across its highly acclaimed 6000, 7000 and 9000 product lines, delivering crisp, clean ergonomics, purposeful functionality and superb sound with everything from vinyl to hi-res digital streaming.

Audiolab products are designed and engineered at the company's HQ in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.

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