

# AudioMatters

Patrick Dillon's musings, reviews and observations on audio gear, music reproduction, and the long lasting pleasure of listening.

Monday, November 25, 2013

## Audioengine Portable DAC/Headphone amp sounding sweet

I've been tempted of late to improve the sound of music I listen to via 'phones on my Mac so when Audioengine announced their new D3, a \$189 headphone amp/DAC, I jumped at the chance to listen. The D3 streams 24/96 audio in a plug and play package that is small and elegantly presented in a tidy aluminum drive that can be carried anywhere.

Set up is as easy as promised, at least on my Mac. Just plug in, go to your sound settings to select it as the output, connect 'phones and brace yourself. Music, music, music. I had to carefully match volume between D3 and normal jack to be sure I was comparing fairly but really, there was no difficulty hearing the improvement wrought by the D3. Air, decay, timbre, detail, all improved to the point that even with my mid-fi Sennheiser 350s which I'd given my son for long-term loan in his gaming pursuits, the sound was excellent. I am hearing stuff on old familiars that put the sonics far closer to my reference rig, and maybe even revealing a bit more in some cases, such is the nature of headphone listening. Bass, always a bit warm with the Senns, is tighter and more resolved than I thought possible with these cans. I can't compare the D3 to the much-lauded (and recently price-reduced) Audioquest Dragonfly, but I don't feel the need to do so right now -- I'm having too much fun. This has opened my ears (literally) to the possibilities of portable listening, so much so that I am going to start looking for some serious phones.

You can buy direct from [Audioengine](#) for \$189, with free shipping and 30 day return privileges. I don't care for 'Best of the Year' awards but if pushed, I'd have to give this one for most value. You won't get an improvement like this for less. Sweet deal.

Posted by [PatrickD](#) at 6:50 PM



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