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AUDIOENGINE D1 - GUARANTEED FOR THE REACHAROUND



Disclaimer: Audio Engine sent the D1 for the purposes of this review. I paid import duties and nothing else. The AudioEngine D1 goes for 169\$. You can find out more about it here: [D1 24-bit DAC](#).

Thanks to needing a cable the D1 doesn't, like the D3 ([reviewed here](#)), require a reach-around on my iMac. And, thanks to its requiring pretty lax amperage, it works well with most devices capable of spitting USB signals. As the story goes, modern iPads and iPhones don't spit the required amperage and can't get the D1 running.

Inside is all the goodness of the D3, and a hell of a lot more. For one, it's easier than ever to hook up a home HiFi thanks to a dedicated RCA output. Optical input keeps the D1 in the compatibility race. But 169\$? Isn't that ridiculous? I've had more expensive lunches. If price explains everything, you probably aren't expecting much from the D1.

Time to expect.

The D1 is pretty damn awesome. It's got the same basic performance of a D3 *plus* way better connection options, not to mention a volume pot, and no need for a reach-around.

Features

What the D1 gave up in simplicity it gained in pluggies. First, as long as you can power it from an external source, it works well with optical sources. Second is the RCA pair at the back, which make the D1 really easy to hook up to

your favorite amp, HiFi, or TV.

If you have a Mac, it's all just plug and play. I assume that with Windows you have to do some sort of driver stretch. I also assume that if you're in the market for a DAC/headphone amp, you know how to do it.

The volume pot is nice to have even if it looks like a gumdrop. Like all AudioEngine stuff, it is grey. While it doesn't play in its ballast, making the slightest of changes isn't as simple as it should be. The volume pot seems to suddenly jump up by a decibel or more. That is to say that unlike an analogue pot, volume neither eases up, nor eases down. Users of sensitive earphones should be careful.

Just like the D3, the D1 resamples information higher than 96kHz to 192kHz. It does it flawlessly. It requires no tricks. It preserves the D1's great plug'n play heritage. Native or no, I dig it.

Package and Accessories

Note: excepting price, the first part in this section remains largely unedited from my review of the D3. That is to say: the same niggles apply.

Every Audioengine product I have opened comes with smudges, fingerprints, and an 'inspected' sign. The thumb prints may be factory seals of approval. I'd rather there were none. At its current price of 169\$, my feelings are ambivalent. Sure, I'd love Audioengine to, with a pristine package, prove to us that they care about perfection, but we are talking about a technological tour de force here. The D1 is small, and powerful. It performs based on those merits, not on satellite expectations.

Note: AudioEngine assure me that the fingerprints and other blemishes will be taken care of.

Despite not fitting into a pocket, the D3 comes with a bit of micro fibre that's supposed to make it easy to stuff into pockets. I'm not sure why. Over the course of like Christmas and New Year and Chinese New Year, and the signing of my newest clients, which amounts to like 3 months, I've never, ever thought of taking the D1 on the road. Part of that comes down to me not owning a notebook computer. The other part is that the D1 doesn't work all that well with smart-phones.

Would I carry it with me if I had a laptop? Probably not. It's nice, but so is room for another camera battery. And if I wanted to keep the D1 safe and sound, I'd not put it in its cheap micro fibre pouch. I know I'm supposed to say: "nice touch", but I just can't. I'd rather see the savings passed onto a nicer package, and/or aluminum front and backs in lieu of the dust-happy soft-touch rubber facia.

Maybe it's that I use Apple computers and shoot with Leica cameras- I'm not sure. But I feel that AudioEngine didn't exactly nail the whole package beyond making what is obviously and violently serviceable.

That said, in recent years, Leica's after-service has faltered. What used to be a limited lifetime guarantee has become two years. Still, it's way better than what you get from Nikon, Canon, Fujifilm (some of which make you pay for their manufacturing faults), and others from Japan. AudioEngine is even better than Leica. The D1, D2, and D3 each come with three year guarantees.

Damn.

A measly 169\$ and a three-year guarantee? Not bad.

Performance and sound impressions after the jump:

