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Audioengine D1 Premium 24-bit DAC Review
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Audioengine D1 Premium 24-bit DAC Review

Audioengine D1 Premium 24-bit DAC Review

Audioengine D1 24-bit DAC: $169

by Wayne Myers

htshack.com

Introduction

Audioengine brings us the D1 Premium 24-bit DAC with Headphone Amplifier output. The company that specializes in computer audiophile products has given us an easy-to-use, inexpensive 24-bit DAC that can handle the full range of common PCM bit depths and sample frequencies.

Description

True to pattern for Audioengine's offerings that I have reviewed, the D1 is compact, built tough, looks sharp, and is simple to use. Its $169 price places it as an attractively economical entry with promise of high performance. The compact D1 makes use of a simple driverless design, with optical and USB inputs on the back, along with RCA line outputs, and a 1/8 inch headphone jack output, power switch/indicator, and volume control on the front.

With USB input, sample rates higher than 96 kHz are resampled to 96 kHz for conversion. With optical input, all sample rates are converted natively.

The D1 was a snap to put to work. I plugged it in and was listening about a minute later. It showed up readily in my foobar2000 configuration panel. Since the compact D1 is USB-powered and has a headphone output, it can easily double as a portable DAC/Headphone Amp. The D1 and USB cable can slip into the supplied protective pouch and into a corner of a carry-on bag and follow you anywhere.

Audioengine Web Site

Specifications

Specifications Show

Associated Review Equipment

Measurement Methods Show

Evaluation

On all the tracks and with all the headphones that I tried it with, the D1 gave impressive performance that indicates a top-notch design and implementation. In fact, I was VERY impressed by the D1 sonic performance. While not a totally fair comparison, I did run it side by side with a reference-class Class A headphone amplifier to see how it fared. It competed admirably in this lopsided match-up, and I was hard pressed to hear any differences on a variety of my more strenuous test tracks.

On acoustic tracks like Nickel Creek's *Reasons Why,* the D1 delivered a nice spaciousness, leaving only empty space between the vocals and acoustical instruments. Sleepytime Gorilla Museum, *Sleep is Wrong,* and Midlake, *Roscoe,* these tracks, with their dense, well-organized mixes, were easy to listen to and discriminate the separate sounds and voices where they might be mashed together if here was a little distortion or if the crosstalk isolation was not the best. They definitely were with the D1. Tracks from Amos Lee, *Mission Bell,* also sounded pristine and natural. New Pornographers, *Brill Bruisers,* Modest Mouse, *Lamp Shades on Fire,* also stayed clean and natural and were fun listens through the D1.

The D1 had plenty of power to drive phones like the Beyerdynamic DT 880 250 Ohm Premium, the AKG K 701, and the Sennheiser HD 600, all with plenty of clean volume.

Conclusions

The D1 Premium 24-bit DAC with Headphone Amplifier output handled my obstacle course with ease, and came out standing tall is a solid entry in the field of DACs at the under-$200 price range. Do not assume from its simplicity or design that it is anything less than a first-class performer. The D1 is a terrific sounding DAC, period. I predict that many who try it out against more expensive competing models will be pleasantly surprised to find the little D1 to be their DAC of choice and their pockets to have more cash remaining than they expected them to. I give the mighty D1 a solid recommendation, and if you need a DAC in your system, be sure the D1 is on your audition list.

Audioengine D1 Premium 24-bit DAC Review Discussion Thread.