

HI-FI WORLD

soundbites

MUSICAL FIDELITY V-DAC £159

The selling point of Mobile Fidelity's new 'V Series' range of hi-fi accessories is that the cost of manufacture is predominantly spent on quality components rather than flash casework, and so it proves with this affordable DAC. The simple black box has the whiff of a school electronics project about it, and the V Series logo font is laughably non-serious looking but it is well conceived as a switchable USB versus digital input (S/PDIF optical or coaxial), phono output device. I would predominantly be interested in such a device as a digital output for a USB-only computer like the MacBook Air, and in that regard it performs very well, needing no drivers, just appearing as an output option in system preferences. Once that option is selected all manner of digital music files could be played out flawlessly

from the appropriate application - basic 128kbps free iTunes files sounding good enough, but variable bitrate MP3 and Lossless FLAC files sounding extremely good - great bass extension was to be had from the Pussycat Dolls 'When I Grow Up' in FLAC.

Musical Fidelity market the V-DAC as the ideal upgrade for cheap CD and DVD players, and this proves to be its ideal level. It has an appealing, clean and open sound that should improve on old and/or cheap players - adding grip, dynamics and low level resolution aplenty to your average nineties budget CD spinner. Still, its budget status does become apparent if it is used to treat the likes of a £1,000 universal player as a transport. One listen to Leonard Cohen's guttural utterances and its surrounding cooling girly vocals

on 'In My Secret Life' was enough to win the convince that the 24/192 converters of the V-DAC did not quite have the edge on the similar ones used by Arcam. This is a cracking value for money entry level DAC - not a universal panacea, but an effective upgrade for humble silver disc spinners of the Compact Disc and DVD variety. In this respect, it's hard to beat. **PC**
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