



Musical Fidelity M6s DAC **£1,399**



If you like your DACs big, bold and flush with features, look no further, as this one has the wow factor

DETAILS

- PRODUCT**
Musical Fidelity M6s DAC
- ORIGIN**
Austria/Taiwan
- TYPE**
32-bit/384kHz PCM & DSD128-capable DAC/preamp
- WEIGHT**
6.9kg
- DIMENSIONS**
(WxHxD)
440 x 100 x 380mm
- FEATURES**
- Inputs: 1x USB-B micro; 3x coaxial; 3x optical
 - Outputs: stereo RCAs; stereo balanced XLRs
- DISTRIBUTOR**
Henley Audio Ltd.
- TELEPHONE**
01235 511166
- WEBSITE**
henleyaudio.co.uk

This upmarket looking model looks a little out of place in this group of half-width and downright titchy DACs, most of which would fit under the shadow it casts. But does the competition live in its shadow sonically? Musical Fidelity seems to think so and posts some impressive technical stats to make its point: stereo separation better than 120dB; signal to noise better than 119dB; and linearity better than 110dB. Jitter is claimed to be immeasurably low, with noise and distortion artefacts all but eliminated, a combination that's said to optimise imaging, detail and transparency.

Evolved out of MF's critically acclaimed M6 DAC, the 's' now does the upsampling/relocking thing and includes a volume control, making it possible to plumb it straight into a power amp or pair of active speakers. Under the bonnet are four stereo 32-bit DACs arranged in a fully differential (balanced) dual mono topology. This configuration works with a 32-bit sample rate converter circuit which asynchronously

upsamples all incoming data rates to 768kHz internally.

But why so high? The thinking is that this moves the digital artefacts to well outside the audio band, allowing their easy removal by filters without detriment to the top portion of the audio band. As you might expect, PCM signals can be handled up to 32-bit/384kHz and DSD up to DSD128.

Sound quality

As you might have gleaned already, there's one DAC in the group that's sonically blessed up to and beyond 'wow' and this is it. To be frank, the big MF sounds extraordinary – not so much as if it's wandered in from a different class as a different planet.

Its soundstage is wider and deeper, holographic in a way the best of the rest merely hints at. Its imaging has pinpoint specificity and presence you feel you can reach out and touch. Highs are more clearly defined, lows deeper and more visceral, and dynamic swings of an order you'd swear were the work of a much more expensive and muscular amplifier

NEW MANAGEMENT

On 8 May 2018, Musical Fidelity's founder and boss Anthony Michaelson sold his company to Audio Tuning Vertriebs GmbH of Austria, marking a new direction for the British hi-fi operation. He is still on board in a design capacity,

Audio Tuning is owned by Heinz Lichtenegger, the hi-fi visionary who founded turntable game changers Pro-Ject Audio Systems. By purchasing Musical Fidelity, Lichtenegger has ensured that the company stays in the hands of an audio-focused company. Audio Tuning was also the distributor of Musical Fidelity products in Austria for more than 20 years, ensuring that there is a reliable service and support structure already in place on which to build the brand. Key design staff have been retained and the existing factory will continue to be used.

than the Hegel H90 integrated I'm using. And it's all proudly digital, devoid of mellifluous manipulation and euphonic shading, locking astonishing transparency with startling dynamic expression.

Whether I cue up Sonny Rollins or Joe Sample, it's clear that I'm hearing that much deeper into the recording, the M6s DAC brushing away the dust from nuances of technique and the recording acoustic missed altogether some of the other models. Raising the source resolution opens things up even more, the DAC's essential transparency and gift for projecting images with the finest low-level detail cementing a sense of realism that only the very best DACs can nail. Robert Len's *Brasilia* takes on a sense of dimensionality that means you simply don't have to listen so hard to hear exactly what's going on as the track's intent and emotion are transmitted unsoftened and are more powerfully felt as a result ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

- SOUND QUALITY**
★★★★★ **LIKE:** Enthralling sound quality; build; features
- VALUE FOR MONEY**
★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Takes up a lot of space
- BUILD QUALITY**
★★★★★ **WE SAY:** Musical Fidelity's best DAC in years sets new standards at the price
- FEATURES**
★★★★★

OVERALL

