



## Oehlbach® USB Bridge

„The USB-Bridge delivers very detailed, powerful and precise sound that is superior to any onboard chip.“

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- + Quality materials
- + Tough finish
- + Technical features
- + Well-balanced sound



Oehlbach has been a familiar and well-known name in the hi-fi sector for more than 40 years, especially for its high-quality audio cables. The manufacturer's product range has expanded considerably in the last few years, with USB-DACs now even available. The range also includes the handy USB-DAC headphone amplifier. According to Oehlbach, this is designed to provide low-noise music pleasure in pocket size format together with a D/A converter from AKM and an amplifier from Texas Instruments. The following test report shows you how this DAC fared in our editorial office.

### THE EXTERIOR - DESIGN AND FEATURES

The USB-Bridge, as Oehlbach has named the USB-DAC, has a rather simple design. The „USB stick“ has been enclosed in an aluminium housing and is rubberised at the ends, making it suitable for its purpose of being carried around a lot. The rubberised cap protects the gold-plated USB type A connector. The package also includes a 15 cm extension cable for the USB port.

Fitted to the other end of the USB-Bridge is the analogue 3.5 mm output jack for connecting the existing headphone or to a stereo system. Headphones are supported with an impedance of 12 ohms - 10k ohms. Located next to the gold-plated output jack, there is also an LED to indicate readiness for operation.

Oehlbach relies on a D/A converter from AKM for its USB-DAC. The AK4396 DAC from Asahi Kasei Microsystems Semiconductor accepts and processes HighRes files of 24 bits and 96 kHz. The converter opts out above this level, which represents adequate resolution in this price category, however, and offers the advantage of being used without a driver.

The amplifier comes from Texas Instruments TAS1020B, with one of its outstanding features said to be particularly low-noise reproduction.

### THE SOUND CHECK

The test device we used was a Sony Vaio Notebook with a Realtek sound chip. The music titles were all in .FLAC format with JRiver Media Center 20 used as the playback program.

### MUSIC REPRODUCTION WITH FREE LOSSLESS AUDIO CODEC (.FLAC)

The way the Oehlbach USB-DAC functions is as uncomplicated and simple as its design. Select a free USB port, plug in and start listening- The headphone amplifier does not need a driver, with Windows carrying out the installation automatically. We used the Sennheiser Momentum Over-Ear 2.0 for our sound check.



After installing the USB-Bridge and starting the first piece of music, the distinctly higher level is noticeable immediately. With the onboard chip, the limit was reached at higher room volume, while the USB-DAC definitely gives a lot more. The USB-Bridge delivers substantially more „juice“ to the headphones and it can be described as real open listening. In addition to the increased volume, the listener also benefits a lot in terms of sound. The music we listened to displayed finer resolution and even quieter passages get more power from the depths.

In the treble range, vocals and instruments seem to be much more finely contoured and can be experienced in greater detail. You can also hear a gain in sound in the mid-tone range, which displays greater presence - whereas this descends more into a kind of mishmash with the onboard chip. The listener is provided with considerably more power in the bass range, with the music titles coming across as more voluminous than via the onboard sound. Put simply, the individual ranges are experienced in a more differentiated way, with the music becoming more three-dimensional and being presented to the listener more powerfully in all ranges.

The width of the USB-DAC meant that we could not use the second USB port on our notebook. However, Oehlbach does provide an extension cable to avoid precisely this inconvenience. And now to conclude:

### CONCLUSION

Oehlbach is entering uncharted territory with the USB-DAC headphone amplifier and is doing it brilliantly. The USB-Bridge is technically convincing with good features that are perfectly acceptable in this price category. In terms of sound, the DAC is a real plus for those who travel a lot and are fed up with the onboard chip in the notebook they carry with them. „The USB-Bridge delivers very detailed, powerful and precise sound that is superior to any onboard chip.“ It supports

HiRes files up to 24 bits and 96 kHz and headphones from 12 ohms - 10k ohms. The easy installation should also not be forgotten.

The Oehlbach USB-DAC headphone amplifier is the perfect companion for all of those who do not want to forego their audiophile passion to listen to music when they are travelling or on the go. The Oehlbach USB-Bridge is currently available for €149 and can be purchased from Amazon and other resellers.

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