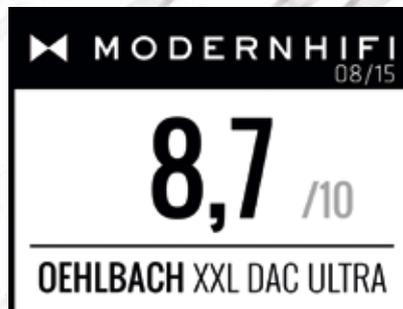


# MODERNHIFI



## Oehlbach® XXL® DAC Ultra GOOD INVESTMENT

Recommended by Modern HiFi 08/2015



Oehlbach® has dedicated itself to developing professional cabling for hifi studios and home cinemas from its very inception. Recently, however, the manufacturer has repeatedly deviated from its origins. Electronic products are set to be an additional string to the cable specialist's bow in the future. One of these products is the Oehlbach® XXL DAC Ultra, which is a headphone amplifier with D/A converter. We tested this small all-rounder as a substitute for a sound card. What it sounds like and what technology it uses is revealed in our Oehlbach® XXL DAC Ultra test.

#### Workmanship

The XXL DAC Ultra from Oehlbach® is a budget-conscious D/A converter that accommodates a lot of technology in a confined space. The size of the housing has been adapted to the circuit board inside. There's no cheating going on here, it simply reveals how efficient it is. The Oehlbach® XXL DAC Ultra is perfectly at home on a desk. However, it can also be used as a compact tool in a hifi rack. The workmanship of the mature 43 cm device is second to none. Metal has been used all around the unit. The front of the Oehlbach® XXL DAC Ultra dispenses with a display, which has become popular with large DACs. The aluminum knob is well labeled for selecting the relevant source. In addition to a volume knob, there are also two headphone jacks at the front of the unit. Although these cannot be controlled separately, they are handy if you want to quickly switch between two sets of headphones. At the rear there are three digital inputs: USB, TOSLINK and coaxial. The analog RCA input can be used to turn the Oehlbach® XXL DAC Ultra into a stereo preamplifier without further ado. Previously this function has only been offered by significantly more expensive models. It is a very practical feature, because it means you can connect your CD or network player directly to the volume-controlled D/A converter. RCA outputs are also provided. We simply couldn't ask any more from a DAC costing €349.

#### Technology

Inside the Oehlbach® XXL DAC Ultra, directly next to the USB input, is a VIA VT1731 audio controller. This 2-channel controller supports audio files with a resolution of up to 32 bit/384 kHz via USB. SPDIF signals up to 24 bit/192 kHz are accepted by the Cirrus Logic CS8422 sample rate converter and converted directly into the target resolution of 32 bit/384 kHz. Before it comes to actually converting the signal, the Oehlbach® XXL DAC Ultra reclocks the incoming USB signal. This process is also known as asynchronous transmission and it cleans up any unclean frequencies from the computer. Digital-to-analog conversion is performed by a Burr Brown PCM5102 unit. From here the TPA6120A2 headphone amplifier from Texas Instruments comes into play. This is an established tool for use in compact hifi equipment where space is at a premium.

#### Sound

The Oehlbach® XXL DAC Ultra also generates sufficient power to fire up high resistance headphones. We tested different headphone models with varying impedance levels and received a loud and powerful signal from every set. In terms of sound, the Oehlbach® XXL DAC Ultra generates a performance that is on the neutral side. It is shrewd enough not to accentuate the frequency response and delivers a clean performance in the treble and bass ranges. It's only amongst the lowest octaves that we hear a slight uncleanliness in the depths of the room. To discern this, however, we had to listen extremely carefully and it must go down as a fastidious criticism. We particularly liked the spatial arrangement of the Oehlbach® XXL DAC Ultra. The headphone amplifier reproduces a large sound stage, which we attribute to low crosstalk between the channels.

#### Summary

Regardless of whether it's used as a sound card replacement or as part of a hifi rack - the Oehlbach® XXL DAC Ultra is a solid performer with excellent technology. As a go-to amplifier for every day use it is highly recommend. For this price, you simply won't get anything else like it.

<b>Workmanship</b>	<b>8.5</b>
<b>Configuration</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Function</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Sound</b>	<b>8.5</b>
<b>Price</b>	<b>8.5</b>

