



Erster Test: Panasonic TV  
mit 3D Polarisation

3D Blu-ray  
Harmar

CD-Player  
Marantz

Ohrhörer  
Bowers & Wilkins

Fernseher

**av magazin.de**  
7/2014

**Oehlbach XXL DAC Ultra  
very good**



**Oehlbach® XXL DAC Ultra**  
**A beautiful sound!**

Recommended by av-magazin 7/2014

Cable specialist Oehlbach has combined elements that simply belong together, namely a headphone amplifier and digital audio converter with USB interface. To see how well this innovative device works and sounds in practice, AV-Magazin put it to the test. If there's one company that's well-acquainted with signal transmission and optimisation, it's Rhine-based cable specialist Oehlbach. The XXL DAC Ultra presented here is a multifunctional audio solution for discerning computer users and hi-fi fanatics that delivers a compelling performance with diverse functions and a high quality sound. To see what extent these attributes apply to this headphone amplifier with digital audio converter, which costs around the €300 mark, read the following report by AV-Magazin.

#### Design and workmanship.

Oehlbach's XXL DAC Ultra is made of sturdy metal and weighs in at around 1.1 kg. In terms of housing options, you can either choose a black or silver finish. The front panel, which is three millimetres thick, accommodates the power button, two headphone jacks, an input selector switch and a volume knob. Thanks to the clever choice of materials, Oehlbach has been able to construct the housing with a low-vibration design, which is beneficial for an excellent sound. On the underside of the unit are four velvety soft levelling feet, which not only ensure excellent stability, but also acoustically decouple the XXL DAC Ultra from the surface below. With a width of 15.5 cm, a height of just 4.8 cm and a depth of 20 cm, the unit is compact enough to easily fit on a small desk, a narrow TV unit or a slim hi-fi rack. The volume knob provides pleasant resistance, which significantly enhances the overall feel of the unit. The rotary source selector switch also feels sturdy and engages properly in position. At the rear of the unit are gold-plated audio connections, all of which are of outstanding quality. The RCA connections are exemplary, as they are durable and ensure a reliable connection. The same can also be said of the two digital inputs and the USB port.



Two sets of headphones can be connected to the compact amplifier and their volume adjusted via a rotary knob.

#### Application and technology.

Oehlbach's XXL DAC Ultra is powered via the supplied external mains adapter. The unit is switched on and off via a small push-button on the left-hand side of the front panel. During operation the audio converter will consume approximately 5.5 watts of power, while in its standby state it will consume less than 0.1 watts. Thanks to its extensive connectivity, all manner of audio sources can be connected. In addition to a stereo analogue input in the form of two RCA jacks, the unit also features a USB port and two digital audio inputs. The latter are designed as optical Toslink and electrical coaxial connections. These enable CD players, network players, TV receivers and computers to be connected easily to the XXL DAC Ultra. The required connecting cables are not supplied and must be purchased separately. Oehlbach offers an extensive range of cables that provide attractive solutions for all manner of audio requirements in all price ranges. If you want to connect the XXL DAC Ultra directly to your computer, then the USB connection is recommended. Mac users are able to connect and use the headphone amplifier straight away. To do this, simply select Oehlbach's unit as the output („Line 1“ under System Preferences/Audio), then sit back and enjoy your music. Windows users, on the other hand, require a special driver, which can be found on the supplied CD. In addition to its classic function as a headphone amplifier, the XXL DAC Ultra can also be used as a pure digital audio converter, for example, to further enhance the sound of an existing hi-fi system. Digital audio devices such as Blu-ray, CD and network players can be optionally connected in a digital-optical or digital-coaxial configuration. A power amplifier or powered speakers can then be connected to the analogue RCA output. Of course, its function as a headphone amplifier is still available, meaning you can use two devices in one. In order to ensure optimum sound quality, Oehlbach has installed a high-end Burr-Brown digital signal converter in the unit. If required, this can handle data streams with up to 32 bit resolution and a 384 kHz sampling rate. It ensures the audio signals are processed with extremely low noise and distortion, which promises high quality playback.



Oehlbach's XXL DAC Ultra is equipped with three digital and two analogue audio connections.

#### Sound quality.

In order to achieve optimum sound quality from the headphone amplifier and the connected digital audio converter, we connect the XXL DAC Ultra to our computer via a USB cable. For our music we use a track by The Bassface Swing Trio in a high-resolution FLAC format (192 kHz and 32 bit resolution). We opted to use the AKG Sudiomonitor K24ODF headphones, as they generate an extremely neutral rendition and have gained a good reputation around the world in recording studios. The sound that Oehlbach's unit produces is flawless. Thanks to the powerful computing chip in the converter, the headphones sound extraordinarily authentic and differentiated. Even the most minute musical details in the complex jazz arrangement are reproduced with extremely balanced dynamics and an agile temperament. We particularly like the perfect stage presentation, as all of the musical instruments are accurately positioned and skillfully reproduced. The XXL DAC Ultra is also able to coax the best possible sound quality from the music signal, even when the unit is supplied with a standard audio signal via the analogue RCA connection. This ensures tracks such as those on the album „The 2nd Law“ by Muse are reproduced with a high resolution and perfect balance. Sade's velvety vocals are produced with a wonderfully delicate timbre, which gives us the impression of the soul diva singing directly into our ear. It's wonderful that we can enjoy listening to music so much through our headphones. The converter/amplifier combo excels in the low frequency range with a contoured and punchy bass line that sounds clean and controlled at all times. Last but not least, we are also extremely impressed by the high level of detail generated by the converter, which brings even the most subtle of nuances to light.

#### Plain text.

Oehlbach's XXL DAC Ultra is a high quality headphone amplifier with built-in digital audio converter that is capable of generating a high-resolution and dynamic sound. The compact hybrid unit coaxes the maximum acoustic performance from any hi-fi system and any set of headphones, which makes it a wise investment for all audio enthusiasts.

- + Sound: VERY GOOD
- + Configuration: OUTSTANDING
- + OPERATION: VERY GOOD
- + WORKMANSHIP: VERY GOOD

