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Chord Mojo £379

Despite the unquestionable value and accessibility of the USB DACs on the previous page, nothing quite brings 'Mobile Joy' like the Chord Mojo - which stands for exactly that. It can be seen as the perfect portable DAC solution for those who crave Chord's Hugo 2 (£1799, below) but stutter at its hefty price.

It takes a while to get used to the device's control layout. Three ball-like buttons take care of power on/off and the volume level. The power button simply lights up in different colours depending on the sampling rate of the input signal (red for 44.1kHz, green for 96kHz, white for DSD). Similarly, the lighting behind the volume buttons changes according to level. It's a little confusing at first, but soon becomes second nature.

The right connections

The Mojo features micro-USB, optical and coax inputs, though the latter takes the form of a 3.5mm jack rather than the usual RCA or BNC, and a second USB connection for charging only. Outputs are limited to a pair of 3.5mm jacks. There's even the flexibility to add

Chord's dedicated streaming module, the Poly (£500), for those that can afford it.

Unlike most rivals, Chord refuses to use off-the-shelf DAC chips inside its converters, instead using powerful programmable processors loaded with proprietary, built-from-the-ground-up software to do the job. It's largely why Chord has enjoyed the success it has.

Once up and running, it's a fabulous performer (and promises to be so for eight hours from a full charge). Stevie Wonder's *Innervisions* on DSD is gripping from the unmistakable opening bars of *Too High* right through to the end of the album. There's ample detail and the kind of insight into the recording that nothing we've heard at this price can better.

But it's not the excellent resolution that impresses us most. It's the Mojo's ability to organise all that information into a cohesive and musical whole that makes it stand out. It can convey power and scale when the music requires, but also has the finesse to make the most of the subtler passages too.

We're also impressed with the Mojo's refinement. Its transparency means poor



The Mojo offers much of the Hugo 2's fidelity and detail but for a good deal less

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BEST DAC
£300-£500

recordings (and sources) will be easy to spot, but this DAC won't go out of its way to be nasty. So in much the same way as it was last year (and the two years before that), the Mojo remains the one to beat at this price.