



## DESKTOP AMPLIFIER/DAC OF THE YEAR iFi Audio ZEN DAC/ZEN Blue

**T**he ever-increasing ZEN range by iFi Audio is proving to be as impressive in sonic terms as it is in terms of value for money. Both the ZEN DAC and the ZEN Blue are worthy of receiving our Highly Commended prize, because both push unexpected boundaries at the price.

The ZEN Blue brings high-grade Bluetooth audio to any existing system, and although we sometimes have a hard time convincing audiophiles that the words ‘high-grade Bluetooth audio’ deserve to go together, a few minutes in front of the ZEN Blue makes for a convincing ‘shut up’ response to such arguments.

The ZEN DAC meanwhile, delivers high-grade PCM, DSD, and MQA files through USB to balanced and single-

ended headphones in a small, light yet deceptively powerful box, with a muscular sound to match. These things would be impressive in a product that cost five times that of the iFi Audio ZEN, but at the price... it’s off the charts good!

In our test Alan Sircom felt that, “Both converters cut to the quick of the sound, exposing an expressive and musically entertaining core in the process. Higher-end products add more resolution, but sometimes at the expense of that refreshing directness of sound. The ZEN devices put you in with the music and that makes them very hard to beat, especially at the price.” +

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