



iFi Audio GO bar £330

The GO bar is the ultimate – if slightly inscrutable – expression of the compact, single-input DAC

▶ DETAILS
PRODUCT
iFi Audio GO bar
ORIGIN
UK/China
TYPE
Portable DAC
WEIGHT
28.5g
DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
22 x 65 x 13mm
FEATURES
 ● Supports sample rates up to: 32-bit/384kHz PCM
 ● MQA compatible
 ● DSD256 and DXD384 capable
DISTRIBUTOR
Armour Home Electronics

IFi's approach to digital audio is fairly consistent, but no less effective for that. The Go bar is an adherent to this philosophy; it's broadly in line with the other DACs in the test in terms of size and configuration, but there are features you won't find on any other converter in the group. It is built around a Cirrus Logic chip, combined with a 16-core XMOS micro controller that sees use in many iFi models. Sample rate handling is PCM to 384kHz, DSD to 256 together with DXD and MQA handling. This is made available to both 3.5mm and 4.4mm outputs, for balanced operation. It differs from rivals by offering four adjustable output filters, 'X-Space' processing to increase the perception of three dimensionality and 'XBass+' for analogue bass augmentation. It also offers a gain boost function, which

together with a notional max output 7.5v should drive most devices. There's also a special impedance-matching low-gain mode for sensitive earphones. The iFi is the most expensive here, but as well as that formidable spec you get a case and good-quality connecting cables for iOS and Android devices. The only catch is the that instead of a display it has a row of LEDs and a set of physical controls and switches. This should be simple enough to interpret, but the dark blue lettering on the black chassis is almost impossible to read.

Sound quality

With the impedance-matching setting for earphones engaged, the GO bar has no issue hitting the test level and shows commendable energy efficiency. *Telephasic Workshop* is delivered with a combination of invigorating energy and impressive balance. The low end is powerful, but very well controlled and never overshadows the upper registers. There is an immersion here that other DACs struggle to match. This impression only increases when the *Haydn Concerto* is played. The GO bar centres Christian Poltéra as the focus of the performance and then creates a space with the supporting musicians around him in a way that is impressively and tangibly real. The weight and richness of the lead cello is the best of the group and the iFi manages to suspend disbelief in a way that is far more apparent than with some of the other converters here. The more compact and processed

ON BOOST

Using the GO bar into the Naim system – having first switched off the low gain setting – yields results that are still very similar to its strong showing with earphones. Some of the slight tonal 'darkness' that I have experienced in the past with other iFi Audio devices (and rather like) is easier to determine in this sort of context, but the same unfailingly real tonality and excellent timing are easy to pick out here too. The prodigious gain and the boost function means that the GO bar is in a class of its own with full-size headphones. It is able to drive a pair of Focal Clear MG cans in a way that no other offering in the group can really get near. I don't know how many would-be owners will make use of this ability, but the iFi leaves you able to choose pretty much any earphone or headphone you can think of and then drive it effectively with no real issues.

nature of *One Trick Phony* doesn't allow it the same scope to show off what it can do, but it still manages to ensure that there is decent separation between Sloan and her supporting electronica and use its neat grasp of timing to sound controlled and engaging throughout. The larger and livelier *Solsbury Hill* is another chance for the GO bar to show off its consistent ability to create a believable soundstage. Having done so, it peppers it with little details; never unnaturally prominent or overblown, but effortlessly stitched into the wider whole. Gabriel sounds utterly believable and the performance has a level of energy and sheer joy to it that is very hard not to be completely engrossed by. Without ever compromising on the perception of reality, the GO bar goes out of its way to be unfailingly enjoyable ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★ **LIKE:** Accurate, potent yet engaging sound; features; solid build

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Product lettering is impossible to read; quite pricey

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A seriously capable DAC with functionality for every occasion, the GO bar is an exceptional product

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL
★★★★★