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Record Collector (UK) – ADL X1 Review

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HIGH FIDELITY

RC's guide to the gear that will get the best out of your records. By Paul Rigby

BOOST THOSE CANS

ADL X1 HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER £395

Slightly smaller than an iPhone and twice as thick, the X1 headphone amplifier is a sleek black piece of hardware that can be plugged into any computer, laptop, MP3 player, phone, cassette player or other music generating device to improve the overall sound quality. Then connect your headphones to the X1, turn the on/volume knob and you are away.

There are plenty of options with the X1, including, at one edge, a headphone socket, line-in (to connect to a computer, for example), a switch to match your headphone type to the X1, a USB mini-B socket (to connect to a computer or to use as a battery charger) and the on/off/volume knob. On the opposite edge is an input selector switch to recognise iDevice connections, a socket which can be used for an optical cable to connect to an amplifier or as another headphone socket, and a USB A socket for iOS devices.

On the top of the chassis are six blue LEDs which illuminate when the X1 senses what resolution file you are currently playing.

First connecting the X1, via the line-in connector, to my SSD-powered Macbook via the headphone socket, comparing it with my reference Just Audio AHA-120 (£350) and using a top-of-the-range pair of Sennheiser HD800 headphones, it was noticeable, while playing a WAV of Skunk Anansie's Hedonism, that the bass of the ADL wasn't just weighty, it was positively subterranean, while the soundstage was big, providing lots of air and space to the performance. Detail was readily apparent, right at the extremities of the soundstage: guitar strums were textured and distinct.

To listen to higher resolution files, 24bit/192kHz, I needed to plug the X1 into the Macbook's USB socket. Loudon Wainwright III, at this resolution, was almost epic in scale. Lush, complex and layered with an emotive delivery, the X1 positively sparkled.

Well designed, with a seven-and-a-half-hour battery life, easy to use and offering plenty of features and options, the X1 is a top-sounding unit. 01276 501 392; www.soundfoundations.co.uk

