



MOJO WORKING

The Mojo is simple enough to connect to a phone although it will need a second cable to link it to the OTG (On-The-Go) cable output. The connection is stable once made and it seems to be entirely resistant to noise and interference from the phone itself. The only downside to when it's used as a mobile device is that while it is fairly small, the form factor isn't a happy partner for most smartphones and fitting the whole ensemble into a pocket is not always that practical.

The good news is that even though it does without a high gain setting, the Chord sounds just as happy with the Bowers & Wilkins P9 Signature as it does the Noble Trident (both reviewed in HFC 421). There is plenty of power on tap and that superb tonal balance remains as the Mojo shines no matter what it's connected to.

Chord Electronics Mojo £399



The competition is getting stronger, but this compact solution still has bags of appeal and performance

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Chord Electronics Mojo

ORIGIN
UK

TYPE
Headphone amp and DAC

WEIGHT
174g

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
60 x 82 x 22mm

FEATURES
● 32-bit/768kHz PCM and DSD256-capable DAC
● Inputs: micro USB-B; optical; coaxial
● Outputs: 2x 3.5mm headphone jacks
● Quoted battery life: 10 hours

DISTRIBUTOR
Chord Electronics

TELEPHONE
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WEBSITE
chordelectronics.co.uk

Having launched its first portable headphone amp/DAC with the £1,400 Hugo (HFC 386) and shaking up the market, Chord Electronics followed with the Mojo in 2015 to take the basic architecture of its Hugo down to a more affordable price point. Central to this is the use of a Xilinx Field Gate Programmable Array (FPGA) to carry out the decoding and filtering.

This is a very powerful device, but one that has no programming on board beyond that which Chord puts on it, meaning that the software is entirely bespoke in operation. This decoding is made available to a USB connection that supports PCM sample rates to 768kHz and DSD256 via Toslink and coaxial input – the latter is on a 3.5mm connection to save space. The Mojo then outputs via a pair of 3.5mm jacks, allowing two pairs of headphones to be used at once. Unlike most rivals, there is no gain adjustment, EQ or filter settings.

The Mojo looks fairly normal, but there are still some idiosyncrasies to the design. The plastic balls that function as the power and volume

buttons change colour to show volume levels and incoming sample rate, and feel a bit strange upon first use. A separate USB charging port means you can't listen and trickle charge the Mojo at the same time as with some rivals unless you have a second spare USB cable.

Build is extremely good and the chassis looks and feels like it can shrug off the daily scuffs and knocks of life on the move. Its shape does have some limitations for portable use (see box out), but it's compact form will win it many admirers.

Sound quality

It might be small and have no gain setting adjustment, but the Mojo is barely at tickover with the test level and absolutely silent when nothing is playing. This means that music rises from an extremely quiet background and has an immediate benefit to its performance. The Neil Cowley Trio's *Kneel Down* has a tangibility that is lacking in most of the rest of the group. Each plucked bass string is an event with a defined beginning and end and this very effective sense of decay also helps piano notes sound real.

Underpinning this is a bass response that balances force and impact with speed and detail to near perfect effect. The pounding bassline of Scratch Massive's *Take Me There* reveals nuances that are easily lost elsewhere. Somerville's vocals extend effortlessly above this low-level force and reveal that the Chord has no shortage of treble energy, but also no sign of the stridency and harshness

that this slightly ballistic recording often suffers from.

This means that when you give it well mastered material from the likes of London Grammar, the Mojo is effortlessly powerful, open and involving. There is a real sense of the soundstage extending far beyond the confines of the earphones and it is tremendously easy to listen to. The scrupulous accuracy of the Mojo does mean that some of the devices here might be perceived to be more fun and propulsive, but the reality is more that it simply presents what is contained in the recording with no embellishment. This means that the more relaxed tempo of Paul Simon's *Under African Skies* is handled perfectly with all of the fine detail buried in the recording extracted and convincingly arranged. The Mojo has been around for a while now, but the level of performance that it offers still takes some beating ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★	LIKE: Balanced and detailed sound; solid build and spec
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★	DISLIKE: Awkward shape for use with mobiles; sound can lack some excitement
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★	WE SAY: A real all-rounder that delivers sparkling performance and great features
FEATURES ★★★★★	

OVERALL

