



dCS Lina DAC X

WINNER

DAC £10K – £20K

By dCS standards, the £13,500 Lina DAC X is quite modest. But outside of that context, 'modest' is by no means a suitable adjective to describe it. The design builds upon, and is a line-level version of, the headphone-focused Lina range, with an increase in chassis size (to 44cm wide) and a large volume knob the main aesthetic distinctions.

The Lina DAC X can drive a power amplifier directly through its XLR and RCA outputs. And on the input side it is flush with two AES/EBUs, one S/PDIF BNC coax, an S/PDIF RCA, a Toslink optical, an asynchronous USB-Type B and a USB-A. To access the DAC's comprehensive built-in network streaming suite and make playback adjustments (such as setting output voltage and filters) in the accompanying Mosaic app, the Lina DAC X must be connected to a network cable; it doesn't operate wirelessly.

A timeless classic

Tested alongside the Lina Clock, which gives additional spatial information that is highly worthwhile, the Lina DAC X convinces more than any other network DAC reviewer Rafael Todes has come across at this price level. Playing Bach Brandenburg No 4, conducted by Raymond Leppard with the ECO, he says: "The colours and textures of the instruments are all beautifully portrayed... utterly credible and highly communicative and enjoyable. There is a precision to the attack of the bows on strings, notes start and stop with accuracy, [and] the different textures of the strings, harpsichord and two recorders are kept sanitarly separate." Add to that flawless timing and impeccably layered soundstaging, and the Lina DAC X rightly earns its place in the dCS Hall of Fame.

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