Pretty Poly

A firmware update brings even more features to Chord's clever streaming module, finds Jon Myles.

Chord's Mojo mini-DAC/headphone amplifier has become something of a benchmark product since its launch almost four years ago. It not only improved the sound quality from smartphones and many a portable hi-res digital audio player (DAP) but is so good it has found its way into many a serious home hi-fi set-up.

Then came the add-on Poly module - which added DLNA, Airplay and Bluetooth streaming to the equation as playback via microSD cards.

Since then Chord has released the Gofigure control app for smartphone control of the Poly (both iOS and Android) to make operation easier, but there's been no other major updates since.

Until now, that is. For Chord has just rolled out a firmware upgrade in the form of Poly 2.0 – and it's more than just a few tweaks here and there.

Instead there's a host of improvements that expands functionality and makes this £500 unit even more tempting for Mojo users.

They include improved DLNA, wi-fi and Bluetooth connection to speed up performance, support for Roon as well as Tidal, Qobuz and internet radio. The update is free and installing is relatively simple - a matter of removing the SDcard if fitted, ensuring the poly is first connected to a network and its charger and then following a simple set of instructions (for detailed instructions visit the Chord Electronics website at www.chordelectronics.co.uk).

In all it took me about 40 minutes to update my Poly with no glitches – the unit working perfectly from the completion of the process.

SOUND QUALITY

To be blunt, the firmware update doesn't alter sound reproduction as that's the job of the Mojo – which is a clean, detailed, crystal-clear DAC with impressive bandwidth.

But what it does do is make control of the Poly seem a lot slicker, tracks loading faster from my NAS drive and playing quicker.

The biggest boost for me is the addition of support for Tidal and Qobuz. Playing a selection of Clash songs from the former I was again reminded just how good this Chord combination is.

Paul Simonon's bass on 'Guns Of Brixton' was propulsive and gutsy with real depth via my Devialet Expert Pro 220 amplifier. On Japan's 'Ghosts' the Chord combination's hear-through quality made David Sylvian's glacial vocals sound spine-tinglingly effective – hanging in the air with a pristine quality.

The more tracks I played and experimented with, the more Poly's new firmware features impressed me. Poly 2.0 doesn't just upgrade the device it virtually turns it into a new piece of hardware – which at precisely zero cost to the consumer is quite an achievement.

CONCLUSION

For existing Mojo/Poly users this is a no-brainer of an upgrade and should be installed immediately. For those thinking of investing in the unit the addition of Tidal and Qobuz support plus the other improvements could just be the deciding factor.

CHORD:
CHORD MOJO: £399
CHORD POLY: £500

CHORD POLY 2.0 FREE

OUTSTANDING - amongst the best.

VERDICT
A firmware update that makes Chord's clever Poly streaming module more impressive than ever.

FOR
- support for Tidal and Qobuz
- Roon ready
- improved Bluetooth, wi-fi and DLNA
- free

AGAINST
- nothing

Chord Electronics
+44 (0)1622 721444
www.chordelectronics.co.uk