

AUDIO
FILE

USB DAC/headphone amp
 Made by: Chord Electronics Ltd, Kent
 Supplied by: Chord Electronics Ltd
 Telephone: 01622 721444
 Web: www.chordelectronics.co.uk
 Price: £495



Chord Mojo 2

Indundated as we are with pocket-money portable headphone amp/DACs, Chord's Mojo 2 asks the question: why drop £495 on one? But once you hear it, you'll understand, especially if top-quality sound on the move is what matters to you.

The Mojo 2 is an upgrade on the top-drawer Mojo [HFN Jan '16], Chord's battery-powered, smaller-than-a-deck-of-cards DAC/headphone amp. It arrives costing £100 more, but this almost feels like a nominal price hike once inflation, and the host of upgrades squeezed in, are taken into account.

Two visual clues identify the new version. The most obvious is a fourth control sphere, adding to the bespoke light show which tells you what function or level is being addressed via the new menu system. Most of these functions are secondary, but many will welcome them: access to mute, crossfeed, button-lock and tone control adjustment in addition to battery

'This isn't just a great mobile DAC/amp, it's a genuine bargain'

level and charging status. We almost said 'easy access', but that would be a fib. The Mojo 2's user interface is challenging to navigate.

The most valuable external change is the addition of a USB-C input (768kHz/32-bit and DSD256 compatible), bringing the Mojo 2 into line with most current smartphones, MacBooks, etc. However, while this DAC might be purchased by some mainly as a headphone amplifier, remember that this is an exclusively digital in/analogue out device.

A 3.5mm S/PDIF coaxial socket with Toslink optical insert is another digital input, while Chord has also held onto its two 3.5mm headphone sockets, for two listeners, albeit without separate output levels for each. The retention

of the original Mojo's Micro-USB port maintains support for Chord's £495 Poly add-on, which adds wireless connectivity and microSD storage.

Internal changes from Mojo to Mojo 2 are extensive, not least the addition of those 'lossless' DSP tone controls, and the removal of coupling capacitors in the output stage. Processor coding and filtering have been upgraded, the noise shaper has been improved for 'greater depth and detail', battery capacity/charging speed has been improved, and dynamic range is said to have been boosted.

MOJO RISIN'

To pitch this against the original Mojo, we used it with EQ set to flat, and employed the input types common to both. For the final verdict, however, the Mojo 2's USB-C port was used. The two were tested with a selection of headphones from Audeze and Master & Dynamic, including the former's high-end and ostensibly power-hungry LCD-5.

Both models did something wonderful, but the Mojo 2 further opened the sound to a degree that's like going from sealed-back to open-back headphones, and it did this while avoiding the sacrifice you expect to make with that transition: the loss of bass. With The Beatles' 'Come Together' [44.1kHz/24-bit FLAC 2009 remaster] there were deep, extended, solid lower octaves, in a sound space which seemed to have no boundaries.

With Mink Deville's "A" Train Lady' [44.1kHz/16-bit AAC] the Mojo 2 further showed its mettle. The most readily discernible gain came in the vocal textures, Willy Deville's voice a challenging mix of the gravelly and the nasal. The Mojo



ABOVE:
 The Mojo 2's durable 'milled from solid' alloy case features multi-colour, illuminated 'ball' controls for power, volume and a new menu/tone function. A rainbow of colours indicates volume level, tone band, battery status and incoming sample rate

2 was slightly less sibilant and a hint warmer, but almost as startling an improvement was in the extension of the soundstage. The presentation really did appear wider, certainly outside of the headphone cups.

Used as just a DAC and fed with George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass 50th Anniversary* [Capitol/Dark Horse/Apple 02435 65238], the Mojo 2 was ran alongside some costlier models which we're not going to embarrass. It delivered such a smooth, silky, open, transparent and *undigital* sound that it beat them all.

VERDICT

If you're an enthusiast who adores dual-purpose items which do more than they need to, Chord's Mojo 2 is a little miracle. This isn't just a great mobile DAC/amp, it's a genuine bargain DAC for any use. ⤵

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Maximum output level / Impedance	4.68Vrms / 0.44-0.90ohm
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBFS)	114.1dB
Distortion (1kHz, 0dBFS/-30dBFS)	0.00013% / 0.00075%
Distortion & Noise (20kHz, 0dBFS/-30dBFS)	0.0018% / 0.0020%
Freq. resp. (20Hz-20kHz/45kHz)	+0.1 to -0.06dB/-7.1dB
Digital jitter (48kHz / 96kHz)	10psec / 12psec
Resolution (re. -100dBFS / -110dBFS)	±0.2dB / ±0.7dB
Power consumption (charging)	2W
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	83x23x62mm / 185g