

# FURUTECH

Head-fi.org Summer Gift Guide— ADL X1

July 2013



## 2013 HEAD-FI SUMMER GIFT GUIDE

### Alpha Design Labs (ADL) X1



**TYPE:** Portable USB DAC, iDevice DAC, and headphone amplifier

**PRICE:** \$479.00

**URL:** [www.adl-av.com](http://www.adl-av.com)

Japanese manufacturer Furutech is a well-known name in the hi-fi world, makers of audio accessories and cabling. Furutech is perhaps most popular for their high-end audio connectors and power

connectors, which can be found terminating the ends of many high-end cabling products, even by other manufacturers. And now they've entered the world of Head-Fi with their Alpha Design Labs (ADL) brand.

In addition their own new headphone, ADL recently released a very cool portable, all-in-one, USB DAC / iDevice DAC / headphone amp combo piece called the ADL X1.

Sporting the ESS ES9023 24-bit/192kHz DAC with an XMOS controller supporting asynchronous mode USB, the ADL is a compelling and versatile portable DAC/amp solution for computer audio. The X1 supports sample rates up to 192kHz, including 88.2kHz and 176.4kHz. On the X1's top panel are six LEDs that clearly indicate the current sample rate. In USB DAC mode, the rear headphone output also serves as an analog line out, and an optical digital output (yes, there are two headphone outputs). The optical digital output will deliver the USB source signal up to 24-bit/192kHz. Flip a switch, and the ADL X1 can also serve as an iDevice DAC, which is very cool.

This brings me to a couple of gripes I have with the X1. First of all, the optical output does not work when you're using an iDevice as the digital source. I use the Fostex HP-P1's optical output, for example, to pass iDevice digital audio to other external DACs that couldn't otherwise support digital directly from iPhones, iPods and iPads, and would've been nice if the ADL X1 allowed for that, too. Also, the X1 headphone output's noise floor is a bit too high for use with my most sensitive IEMs.

I've only had the ADL X1 for a short time, but, overall, my first impressions are good. The X1's sound is on the smoother side, but with enough detail to encourage the pulling out of my high-res music from [HDtracks.com](http://HDtracks.com). As a headphone driver, I've found the ADL X1 to be best matched with my over-ear headphones that benefit from amping, but that don't require heaps of power--headphones like the Sennheiser HD 598, Sony MDR-7520, with headphones like the Audeze LCD-2 and HiFiMAN HE-400 also within its reach. The HiFiMAN HE-6 is well beyond the X1's comfort zone, but can be driven quietly, if need be.

I'm definitely looking forward to spending more time with the ADL X1, and hope to have more to say in the next update to the gift guide.