

AUDIO
FILE

Streaming DAC/preamp and power amp. Rated at 125W/8ohm
 Made by: Simaudio Ltd, Canada
 Supplied by: Renaissance Audio, Scotland
 Telephone: 0131 555 3922
 Web: www.simaudio.com; www.renaissanceaudio.co.uk
 Prices: 380D, £4600; 330A, £2800



Simaudio Moon 380D & 330A

At the heart of Simaudio's 380D DAC/preamp is its M-AJIC32 processing (Moon Asynchronous Jitter Control in 32-bit mode) and at the core of this is an eight-channel ES9016S Sabre DAC from ESS. Simaudio claims to have further improved jitter performance with its own 'Alpha Clocking System'.

The 380D has separate power supplies, each with a toroidal transformer and 11 stages of voltage regulation, for its digital and analogue sections. The analogue stage is a fully differential circuit and balanced XLR connections are strongly recommended, although RCAs are also provided.

'We struggled to hear any differences between "DAC direct" and MiND'

The unit has eight inputs covering the full range of interface options: two AES/EBU inputs (XLRs), S/PDIF via two optical Toslink inputs, three electrical inputs and a B-Type USB socket for pushing data in from a computer source. All inputs accept signals up to 24-bit/192kHz.

The busy rear panel sports a main power switch next to the IEC power cord inlet plus a 12V trigger output

and a socket for an IR receiver. There's also an RS-232 port.

The infra-red handset provided is a perfunctory plastic affair, with keys for controlling a Moon CD transport and others for volume up/down, mute, display on/off and standby. There are two additional options for the 380D: an extra £900 buys a remote-controlled volume circuit, obviating the need for preamp and interconnect cables and another £900 adds a MiND built-in network client, to allow music streaming from digital music libraries stored on computers, etc.

The 330A Moon stereo power amplifier, is rated at 125W/8ohm and housed in a slim enclosure. The amplifier is a 'zero global feedback' Class AB design that claims to operate in Class A up to 5W output, using four output transistors per channel. These are bipolar devices

that Simaudio has specially made.

HOLOGRAPHIC

We found this DAC/preamp and power amp combo to be noticeably even-handed and free of coloration. Certainly there is no 'tubey' warmth or exaggerated presence to the midband: rather it sounds uncommonly balanced and neutral – and delightful to listen to.

ABOVE: The 380D's large display shows input selection and sampling frequency. The 330A (lower unit) is a balanced, symmetrical design with a huge 400VA toroid and two pairs of bipolar output transistors per channel; it has balanced inputs plus RS-232 and 12V triggers

Exploring a bunch of audiophile recordings to test the combo's mettle showed it to be immensely confident-sounding: fast and precise with deep, taut bass, a hear-through midband and sweet, fatigue-free treble. Guitarist Stew Cutler's *Insignia* album [Naim] sounded fresh and alive, the reproduction of the space around the drum kit clearly painted to create a palpable image of musicians performing beyond the confines of our monitors.

Similarly Patricia Barber's live *Companion* CD [Blue Note/Premonition] sounded spookily holographic, the essence of her band's masterful performances as they worked their way through interpretations of Sonny and Cher's 'The Beat Goes On' and Santana's 'Black Magic Woman' delivered with both grace and assurance.

We were bewitched by the Moon units' reproduction of transients that gave staccato bass lines buoyancy and punch, while the stability and focus of the image didn't waver whatever was happening dynamically. And we struggled to hear any perceptible difference in image focus or musical dynamics between the 'DAC direct' and the MiND network player.

VERDICT

Such is this combo's even-handed nature when reproducing any type of music it's difficult to criticise it – unless, that is, you crave romantic euphony and/or specifically need a more powerful amplifier. The 380D is a fabulous USB-equipped DAC, and if you want to stream music and control your system via a tablet or smartphone then the app for the MiND network player has been thoughtfully executed. ⬇

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	135W / 215W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	165W / 320W / 600W / 85W
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, 10W/8ohm)	0.009–0.083%
Distortion (380D, 20Hz-20kHz, 0dBfs)	0.00018–0.00045%
Freq. resp. (20Hz-20kHz, 380D/330A)	+0.0 to –0.07dB/+0.0 to –0.15dB
A-wtd S/N ratio (380D/330A)	109.2dB @ 0dBfs/96.2dB @ 0dBW
Digital jitter (S/PDIF / USB)	10psec / 10psec
Power consumption (380D/330A)	17W / 27W idle / 400W rated op
Dimensions (WHD, 380D/330A)	429x86x333mm/429x89x356mm