



Class D amplifier/USB DAC. Rated at 400W/8ohm  
 Made by: Gato Audio, Denmark  
 Supplied by: Elite Audio (Distribution) Ltd, London  
 Telephone: 0203 397 1119  
 Web: www.gato-audio.com; www.eliteaudiouk.com  
 Price: £3890



# Gato Audio DIA-400S

Adding an 'S' suffix to its DIA-400, Gato claims 'The reference in Class D amplification just got even better'. The £3890 DAC-equipped integrated dispenses a claimed 400W per channel into 8ohm.

Gato's Frederik Johansen says that the design has been changed and improved in more than 20 ways, with an optimised mains filter, updated power supplies, a new input stage and improved output stage, new analogue stages for the DAC, revised digital signal routing and updated firmware.

The built-in DAC is based on the well-known 192kHz/24-bit PCM1794 from TI, used here in dual-differential mode. There are coaxial and optical S/PDIF inputs as well as USB and, new on the 'S' model, Bluetooth. All digital inputs are upsampled to 192kHz.

'With the epic "Bird On A Wire" the '400S gave a big, almost glossy sound'

All Gato's electronics so far have shared the same striking casework design, with the elegant curves, clever heatsink sides and decorative high-gloss top panel as seen here. Apart from the large central volume knob, the only controls are two push buttons. One gives you operate or standby while the other cycles through the available inputs. Gato has made the display big

enough to read across the room, and white dot-matrix numbers make a pleasant change from the usual blue LEDs.

If this amplifier's front fascia is simple, its rear panel is pretty crowded with socketry [see caption], plus analogue preamp outputs and a 12V trigger for system control. There is also a connector for the supplied Bluetooth antenna, but there's no headphone socket.

Well thought-out, the DIA-400S really is easy to set up and use. As usual, it connects to a Mac via USB with no driver required, while you can stream from an iPad or iPhone.

### SUBTLY ATMOSPHERIC

The DIA-400S can really convey subtleties of atmosphere and timbre in all kinds of music.

With Olivia Trummer's *Fly Now* CD [Contemplate], it allowed her to succeed beautifully in evoking a wintry street scene with her uniquely deft combination of a harmonically-informed vocal and delicate piano effects.

In fact, with the DIA-400S it was always possible to enjoy the contribution of the recorded acoustic. A great example was the Hildegard of Bingen track on the original *HFN Test CD*, 'Columba aspexit' [Hyperion; *A Feather On The Breath Of God*]. Here we found ourselves listening afresh as the voices rebounded sweetly around

**ABOVE:** At the rear of the unit, coaxial and optical S/PDIF digital ins are joined by USB and Bluetooth alongside three line ins on RCA and XLRs. Similar, single-ended (RCA) and balanced (XLR) preamp outs are offered along with pairs of 4mm speaker outlets

the church acoustic. In general, the DIA-400S had no difficulty throwing out a huge, wide soundstage that could seemingly extend well beyond the loudspeakers.

And there was no doubt that the DIA-400S could rock. From Jennifer Warnes' *Famous Blue Raincoat* [Classic], 'First We Take Manhattan' had lots of drive. The bass was always deep and firm too. With the epic 'Bird On A Wire', the DIA-400S gave a big, almost glossy sound.

With the coaxial S/PDIF digital input fed as a DAC from a CD transport, the 400S's sound was very detailed, yet very smooth and appealing too. It gave the impression of having eased away any remaining rough edges or congestion there might be in the usual CD player sound, but without any obvious penalty. With 'Grandmother' from Rebecca Pidgeon's *The Raven* [Chesky], for example, the web of low-key background vocals now seemed a little less tangled.

Playing ripped CD material via the USB input, the Gato once again gave a pleasingly clean and detailed sound. It wasn't 'clinical' or over-etched, but well-balanced and attractive. As for music at a full 192kHz/24-bit, the Gato delivered just as you'd hope. Listening to part of Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* from a recording by Tony Faulkner, we were captivated by the inner detail and timbral subtleties.

### VERDICT

Gato's successful update of its DIA-400 has produced a versatile, user-friendly amplifier that gives fine sound as well as providing a whopping power output. The built-in DAC also performs very well. ☺

### HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Continuous power (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	370W / 550W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	366W / 700W / 545W / 330W
Output impedance (20Hz-20kHz)	0.029-0.145ohm (73ohm, pre)
Freq. resp. (20Hz-20kHz/100kHz)	-0.1 to -0.1dB/-7.6dB (Analogue)
Digital jitter (USB at 48kHz)	10psec
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/0dBFS)	76.8dB (Analogue) / 106.6dB (Dig)
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz; 0dBW/0dBFS)	0.0008-0.064%/0.0023-0.003%
Power consumption (idle/350W)	33W / 850W (2W standby)
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	325x105x420mm / 13kg