

Onkyo DP-S1 **£400**



Behind a slightly sober exterior, this player has some seriously capable hardware and software at its disposal

DETAILS

- PRODUCT**
Onkyo DP-S1
- ORIGIN**
Japan/China
- TYPE**
32-bit/192kHz & DSD128-capable Digital Audio Player
- WEIGHT**
130g
- DIMENSIONS (WxHxD)**
63 x 94 x 15mm
- FEATURES**
- Quoted battery life: 15 hours
 - 16GB internal storage
 - 2x microSD slots (200GB max each)
 - Streaming services support: Tidal; Deezer; TunesIn
- DISTRIBUTOR**
Onkyo UK
- TELEPHONE**
0208 8363510
- WEBSITE**
uk.onkyo.com

While still seen by many as an AV brand, Onkyo has been racking up an impressive set of reviews for its stereo products of late. Its two portable audio players are cousins to sister brand Pioneer's models, but differ on some key internal components. The DP-S1 is the smaller of two players between the more affordable models and the premium entries. It is built around a brace of ESS Sabre ES9018C2M DACs running into a pair of ES9601K headphone amps. This means it is fully balanced and the most affordable player here to sport a 2.5mm balanced headphone output. If you don't want to connect headphones, aptX Bluetooth is on hand.

It has a maximum supported sample rate of 32/192 PCM and DSD128, and by the time you read this will also offer MQA playback. Completing the picture is support for Tidal, Deezer and TunesIn. Twin microSD slots mean that it has the largest notional storage capacity, with a potential 416GB.

As impressive as all this technical prowess is, the DP-S1 doesn't look or feel particularly substantial. The

display is a little on the small side, making the Tidal app hard to navigate and use, and there is no facility for offline storage of content. There is a smartphone control app for the DP-S1 and while this sounds a little odd, in practise it is rather clever (see boxout).

Sound quality

Of all the models here, the DP-S1 works hardest to hit the test level with the Audeze iSINE 10, suggesting it will work best with in-ears rather than full-size headphones. There is much to like about the way it sounds, though. Its handling of *Kiyomizu-Dera* offers up a lovely balance of spaciousness, tonal accuracy and enough energy to engage you from the outset, balancing impeccable realism and faithfulness with a sense of musical joy. The flute is rich and realistic and backed by impressive decay on the plucked harp strings, while there is enough snap to the percussion to give the piece the energy it needs. This energy is also present with *Take Me There*, ensuring that the player gets the head nodding in a way that escapes some of its peers in the group. The bass is deep, well defined and integrated nicely with Jimmy Somerville's vocals and the surrounding effects.

What makes this more impressive is that when this propulsion isn't really needed – such as with *The Wind That Shakes The Barley* – there is no trace of it being forced. Instead, it does a fine job of presenting Lisa Gerrard's vocals with a real sense of the space of venue and her positioning within it. There is plenty of headroom for the dynamic peaks of her voice and a very unforced and natural tonality. Moving on to *Light My Fire*, the same rhythmic assurance that the DP-S1 has shown elsewhere is still present but this time combined with a deft touch with tonality and three dimensionality. The result is an extremely good listen. Jim Morrison's vocals have a richness and detail that really brings them to life, while the sheer vibrancy of the remainder of the band is captured to great effect ●

LOOK, NO HANDS

Onkyo has realised that the overwhelming majority of would be DP-S1 owners are likely to be simultaneously carrying a smartphone on their person. With this in mind, operation can be controlled using the smartphone over a Bluetooth communication app – imaginatively enough called the DapController App. Not only is this superior to using the player itself, but it also means you can put it in a bag or side pocket and still have full control via your phone. The app isn't perfect – it takes some time to pair with the DP-S1 and it can't access all the functionality – but it does at least show that Onkyo is thinking about how these players might be used in the real world and goes some way to nullifying the small screen on the player. The Bluetooth functionality of the DP-S1 also displays the same sonic qualities into the Naim ND5 XS as it does headphones.



2.5mm balanced output



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OUR VERDICT

- SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Lively and spacious sound; sophisticated features
- VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Doesn't look or feel particularly special; limited headroom
- BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★ **WESAY:** Has sparkling performance and some useful features
- FEATURES** ★★★★★

OVERALL



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