



Audiolab 6000A £600



Covering all the bases for the modern music lover, can the Audiolab match performance to functionality?

DETAILS

- PRODUCT**
Audiolab 6000A
- ORIGIN**
UK/China
- TYPE**
Integrated amplifier
- WEIGHT**
7.8kg
- DIMENSIONS (WxHxD)**
445 x 66 x 300mm
- FEATURES**
 - Quoted power output: 2x 50W (8ohm)
 - Inputs: 3x RCA; 2x optical; 2x coaxial; MM phono stage; aptX Bluetooth
 - 24-bit/192kHz-capable DAC
 - 6.35mm headphone output
- DISTRIBUTOR**
IAG Group Ltd.
- TELEPHONE**
01480 447700
- WEBSITE**
audiolab.co.uk

Recently introduced at the entry level of Audiolab's range, the 6000A ties with the Rega and NAD as the most affordable amplifier in the test. Despite this, the specification is entirely competitive with the group. It offers 2x 50W into 8ohm power output and has three analogue inputs and a moving-magnet phono stage along with a quartet of digital inputs – two optical and two coaxial – and Bluetooth connectivity handled via an ESS Sabre DAC that supports sample rates up to 24-bit/192kHz in this configuration (see boxout).

This is a fairly comprehensive spec, but Audiolab isn't done there. You get a headphone socket and the ability to use the 6000A as both a preamp via a dedicated output and a power amp via a bypass input. These modes can be selected on the front panel, turning off the sections you don't need.

The 6000A is exceptionally well made too. Everything feels immaculately assembled and finished to a high standard while details like the clear and easy to read display are very welcome. The remote control doesn't feel as substantial as it looks, but works well and covers the main functionality of the 6000A and the matching 6000CDT CD transport. Judged on its own merits, this is a

good-looking amplifier that feels more than competitive with the more expensive models here.

Sound quality

The 6000A has no trouble hitting the test level, but a number of other amps in the group have more in reserve having done so. This is pretty much where the negativity ends, though. *No Diggity* is delivered with energy and a feeling of dynamics that makes the music something you are involved in rather than simply a spectator to. This is combined with excellent tonal realism and a well-judged balance between top-end energy and warmth. The thinner mastering of *Obsessions* gains a warmth and weight that isn't consistently present with rivals.

Given a great recording, the results are outstanding. The Florestan Trio sounds immediate and compellingly lifelike. The rapid piano work is delivered as easily distinguishable individual notes, each one possessed of the weight, tonal richness and decay needed to make the instrument believable. The supporting strings are rich and free of any hardening at the upper registers. The interplay between instruments is something that the Audiolab makes completely convincing, making this a hugely enjoyable device to listen to.

SABRE DANCE

In what might be seen as a dig at its rivals, Audiolab's website notes that the ESS Sabre DAC can sound a little hard if not correctly implemented and used with the right partnering equipment. Its experience is clear, however. The 6000A's performance over digital very closely mirrors the analogue inputs and that same excellent balance of refinement and attack is present here, too. Fine detail retrieval is extremely good, as is the soundstage and three dimensionality. The analogue decoding of the Bluesound test source has the edge, but it is closer than you might expect given the pricing of the two components. The phono stage is merely pretty good, rather than great. Noise levels are low, but the dynamics feel a little squashed compared with the best in the test.

The final Twin Shadow test track finishes off proceedings with an excellent bass response that is as well balanced as the upper registers. There are more than acceptable levels of depth and impact, but these don't come at the expense of integration with the rest of the frequency response or any loss of detail. Instead, they perfectly complement the superb vocal turn and deliver a performance that is a combination of accuracy, refinement and listener engagement ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

- SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Impressive sonic performance; excellent feature set; build
- VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Needs careful speaker partnering; phono stage merely good
- BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★ **WESAY:** A brilliant integrated that delivers all the basics with useful extra features
- FEATURES** ★★★★★

OVERALL

