



Pro-Ject MaiA S2 £450

The updated MaiA has several refinements but, as before, size is the real surprise

▶ DETAILS

PRODUCT
Pro-Ject MaiA S2

ORIGIN
Austria

TYPE
Integrated amplifier

WEIGHT
925g (not including power supply)

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
206 x 38 x 165mm

FEATURES

- Quoted power output: 2x 25W (8ohm)
- Inputs: 2x RCA; 1x MM phono stage; 1x coaxial; 2x optical; 1x asynchronous USB
- aptX Bluetooth
- Cirrus Logic DAC

DISTRIBUTOR
Henley Audio Ltd.

Even in the scaled-down world of desktop hi-fi, the MaiA S2 appears to be a conundrum to rival the Spinal Tap dressing room miniature bread fiasco. No matter how you fold the meat – in this case nine sources that can be connected simultaneously – there doesn't seem any way they will all fit inside an aluminium box measuring just 38mm high, 206mm wide and 165mm deep.

In addition to the MM phono stage essentially lifted straight from the company's entry-level outboard Phono Box, it has three line-level inputs (two RCA, one 3.5mm jack) and, on the digital side, one XMOS asynchronous USB and one coaxial (both good for 24-bit/192kHz), two opticals (up to 24-bit/96kHz) and aptX Bluetooth with a dedicated antenna. There's also a 6.3mm headphone socket and a 3.5mm jack output for connecting a subwoofer.

The improved aluminium casework doesn't just look neat and feel good, it's also said to significantly cut down electromagnetic interference. Under the lid, a brace of modified Flying

Mole Class D modules, in a dual mono configuration, deliver 25W per channel. The on-board Cirrus Logic CS4344 multi-bit Delta Sigma DAC again is lifted from Pro-Ject's starter E Box external DAC, which bodes well.

Key to keeping things so small, of course, is cool-running Class D, which removes the need for banks of bulky heat sinks. Another space saver is the off-board, switch-mode power supply. It's a fairly modest Chinese-branded item, so Pro-Ject offers its own upgraded version for £189.

Sound quality

Given its negligible weight and tiny footprint, it's truly hard to credit the sheer generosity of the MaiA S2's sonic output – not just in scale and soundstage real estate, but the sense of mass contained therein. The only obvious limitation appears to be bass power and slam playing Michael McDonald's super charged *Motown II* classic at party volumes which, given the test speakers 88dB sensitivity, is right on the amp's loudness limit. Push harder and it gives in gracefully, but all the other amps in the group

are capable of going louder at lower frequencies. With Pro-Ject's optional beefier power supply in play, it would be a closer call. That said, take the volume down a click or two and the Pro-Ject is back in the game, delivering deep, smooth and rhythmically agile bass without a hint of boom or bloom – exactly what *I Was Made To Love Her* needs to get feet moving.

The amps higher up the frequency range is equally promising. With the Chord DAC plumbed in, the midband sounds fresh, incisive, dynamic and imbued with excellent inner detail. It does *Blade Runner's Tears In Rain* a big favour, more clearly separating Roy Batty's dying words from the atmospheric curtain of drizzle around him. The treble displays considerable discrimination, subtlety and coherence here, helping portray a cold, haunting soundscape through which the warmer, fatter textures of Vangelis' synthesisers can seep and finally dominate. It's neck-tingling stuff.

The amp's own Cirrus Logic DAC is no slouch but, as typically seems to be the case when switching from the Hugo 2, gives a softer, less critical account of whatever it's fed. In the case of *Painted From Memory*, the effect shines a warmer filter on Elvis Costello's voice and the ranks of massed strings, which is by no means a terrible fate ●



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OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★
LIKE: Mini form factor; fully featured; great sound quality

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★
DISLIKE: Bundled power supply limits ultimate performance

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★
WE SAY: So much from something so small – a triumph

FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL

