

The iFi Zen Blue aptX HD Bluetooth Receiver

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British hifi specialist iFi Audio launches a means for customers to add offline streaming functionality to any system-- the Zen Blue, a Bluetooth receiver featuring support to the latest, high-resolution codecs.

The Zen Blue is a compact device one can connect to any component via RCA (unbalanced), 4.4mm Pentaconn (balanced), optical or coaxial outputs. Meanwhile wireless codec support includes the Qualcomm aptX HD (24-bit/48kHz) and aptX Low Latency, the Sony LDAC (24-bit/96kHz), Huawei HWA (24-bit/96kHz) and Apple AAC. A front panel LED indicates the Bluetooth codec currently in use, and an on-unit LED shows the sample rate.

iFi Audio says the Zen Blue is the first device of its kind to use the Qualcomm QCC5100 processing and digital-to-analogue (DAC) chip, and it has added further tweaked the hardware to optimise performance. For instance the digital and analogue stages are separate, and signals are routed through an ESS Sabre DAC chip as well as the QCC5100. The analogue stage is also a balanced design.

The Zen Blue is available from October 2019. Following it is the Zen DAC, a device switching Bluetooth connectivity with a USB input and an integrated headphone amp.

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