

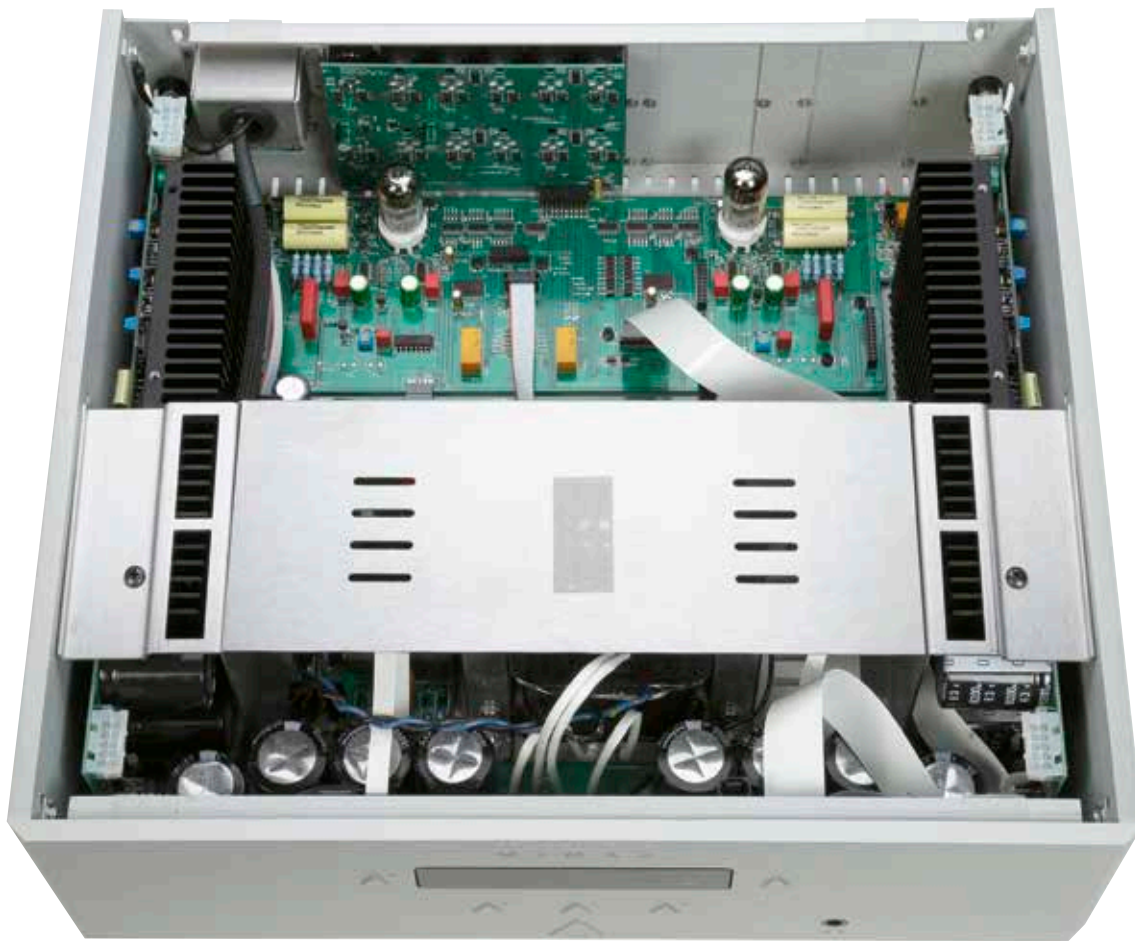


**HIGH END
fair
novelty**

You can get an adaptive, illuminated and motion-sensitive metal remote control for around 400 euros extra charge. ▶

MAKE 1 OUT OF 2

An integrated amplifier always consists of a preamplifier and an output stage, discretely combined in one body. But only very rarely is there so much similarity between siblings to discover as between the brand-new Aesthetix "Mimas" and its big brothers "Calypso" and "Atlas".



▲ The neat, channel-separated design of the preamplifier and power amplifier sections and the solid workmanship can impress.



◀ Instead of the conventional, externally made toroidal transformer, Aesthetix uses a homemade one.

Aesthetix founder and mastermind Jim White doesn't seem to be in a particular hurry. Although he has exhibited his products at all important hi-fi trade fairs for many years, he would not always present one, let alone several, new products, as is otherwise customary in the industry. Instead, the American rather takes his time to develop new products, until they are ready to enter the long production cycle, which is used to still add, usually retrofittable, qualities. The resulting product consistency on the one hand and updateability on the other are, as it seems, appreciated by his customers: only very rarely is the name

Aesthetix found on the usual second hand platforms, although the quantities sold have added up significantly over the years. The Mimas is the first integrated amplifier of the Americans, and a look at the constructive details sparks the hope it could have benefited a lot from the company's valuable gene pool on its way. This, for example, includes the rocker function of the blue LED display, otherwise characteristic of the "Saturn" series. It indicates the selected input and controls the volume by pressing left or right. But not only such outer appearances are already familiar from other Aesthetix devices, the interior also shows evident parallels:

Volume control extreme

Like the Calypso preamplifier, the Mimas features an 88-level, uncompromising volume control, made from metal film resistors that are selected to an accuracy of 1%, exceeding any reasonable level in calculatory terms. While every manufacturer knows that a potentiometer can harm the sound, Jim White draws his consequence and has the component banned – he believes that an important part of the worldwide appreciated Aesthetix sound, combining tube magic with sound neutrality and richness of detail, is created that way. In the fully balanced preamplifier section there is one 6922 tube per

TEST COMPONENTS

RECORD PLAYER:
 Transrotor Rondino nero;
 Technics SL-1000R

CD PLAYER: T+A MP 3100
 HV; Music Player Balanced

AMPLIFIER: Audionet Watt;
 T+A 3100 HV; Symphonic
 Line RG9 MKIV

SPEAKER: Canton Ref.
 8K; Gauder DARC 100;
 PMC MB2 XBD

ELECTRIC WIRE:
 div. Audioquest

channel, which is burned in for 100 hours before installation and selected for low distortion, insensitivity to microphony, noise level and finally for an equal channel gain factor of 0.1 dB. In the power amplifier section there is a big difference to the Atlas output stage: the driver stages are constructed here without the driver tubes installed in the separate power amp - they did not fit into the housing of the Mimas.

What remained, however, is the feedback-free, balanced circuit without capacitors at the output and also another specialty of the Californians: the complex power supply using a 900 VA transformer wound by Aesthetix itself, where White consistently dispenses with the installation of a conventional toroidal transformer. As expected, it has various secondary windings to separately supply individual sensitive circuits with powerful and cleanly smoothed voltage. This task is performed by high-quality capacitors with a filter capacity of almost 180,000 uFarad. At every point it is very important to White that the component specifications are strictly adhered to. Both the FETs of the drivers and the bipolar transistors of the power stage are carefully

selected - this way, operation together with almost any loudspeaker is guaranteed, despite the lack of negative feedback. Generating a good 150 watts per channel into eight ohms and almost twice as much into four ohms, it seems too have all the necessary attributes.

That's enough about the electronics, so let's take a look at the equally impressive equipment of the Mimas, which is by the way named after the tenth of Saturn's 62 known moons: first of all, the five inputs are all available in both cinch and XLR form, while unbalanced signals are always converted internally into balanced ones. Outputs for the operation of additional power amplifiers or subwoofers are also available in both connection variants. If you want to reduce the load on your main speakers during subwoofer operation, you can activate a multi-staged, switchable high-pass filter. Home cinema fans, on the other hand, will be delighted to hear that each input can be enabled as a bypass for home cinema applications. Optional slots for phono and D/A-conversion will

be available in the future for around 1000 Euro each. The former will be granted MM- and MC-system support and will even be adjustable in gain, capacity and terminating resistance by remote control. Being built without tubes, it is still fully discrete, and no

cheap IC-grab.

At least on paper, the digital board can also impress: the analog section is fully balanced and the digital sector offers two coaxial inputs, accepting signals up to 192 kHz each, and two optical inputs, as well as an asynchronous USB input that processes up to 352 kHz and 24 bits and even DSD signals at double rate. The used converters are the finest and best currently available on the market - ESS Sabre, type 9038 pro. We will check out both options as soon as the slots are available.

For those who still haven't had enough, the standard headphone output can be replaced with a high-quality class-A-technology one, featuring 1 watt of power into 32 ohms - unfortunately there is no price yet. Another practical feature is



▲ Output stage section left and right, five inputs and one pre-out in cinch and XLR, plug-in options for DAC and phono board – thoroughly equipped

the possibility of connecting a separate infrared receiver. If you prefer to hide the Mimas from potential visitor's views, you can then still control it remotely. Software updates can be carried out using a RS 232 interface – given you can find the necessary cable that is rarely used today. But if you can't, your trusted retailer will be happy to help. What else is there to be said? For instance, that you can name each of the five inputs with an abbreviation of maximum four letters and that each input can be individually adjusted by a few dB in volume. If you have an especially power-demanding speaker, the Mimas also offers an internal gain adjustment of 15 decibels by means of a jumper – and it really makes a difference, adding slightly more dynamics and openness. For those unsure: if the loudspeaker has a sensitivity of about 85 dB or more, it is definitely worth a try. And for the curious and experimental ones it is a hardly resistible temptation – isn't it? The mechanical quality of the case and keys is also very trustworthy and allows you to expect years of untroubled listening pleasure.

Handling giants

Right in the beginning there was an especially difficult task on the agenda - to get going the 116 kilo heavy and man-high PMC MB2 XBD SE, perhaps being the most voluminous loudspeakers that ever found their way into our listening room. Immediately the Mimas was ready to go and fascinated with the most wonderful and rarely experienced variety of timbres. Voices from Lyn Stanley and Diana Krall to Alexis Korner appeared charmingly, giving the impression of transporting the performer's exact mood while recording.

The American amplifier revealed another quality when it came to depicting spaciousness and depth, doing it on an almost wasteful scale – you could nearly feel the air in the room. Contours, though, were drawn with a broad brush rather than a sharp pen, thus not showing the very last detail in terms of imagery sharpness. Listeners of magnetostats will know this effect, which can also occur if the speakers are either too far apart and/

or have not been angled to the required extent. Also noticeable was the bass being springy and swinging, but lacking a bit of tightness, though without ever sounding softened or even squishy.

In the next listening session, having moved into the small STEREO listening room, the Mimas first played on the brand-new Canton Reference 8K and was compared to the entire elite of integrated amplifiers that we were able to find in-house (see box: test components).

Different speaker, different experience

Listening to them, all being fed by T+A's streamer/CD player Music Player Balanced, combined with the Canton, the Mimas again captivated the listener with an extraordinarily emotional address, without crossing the border to being beautifully colored and flattering. In direct contrast the opponents seemed a little cool, almost clinical. The Mimas, on the other hand, has to take some critique in the bass-range, which we experienced lively and powerful, but without the last kick of precision.... Nevertheless, there was a consensus about the performance: strong! You can be perfectly happy for a long time with this setup... if you don't make the mistake and let a Gauder DARC 100 play instead of the Canton. Sure, the twelvefold price is a bitter pill that can only be swallowed by very few fortunate people, but the experience left a lasting impression – now there was actually only music in the room.

Whereas before it required some kind of weighing to find a personal favorite, Aesthetix now proved to be the master of the situation with David Munyon (Track 8, Stockfisch Vol. 4) as well as with the Supreme Sessions of the Swedish loudspeaker manufacturer Marten. Its warm, friendly tone, which previously sounded a tad impure combined with the Canton speakers, is now its trump card, while any trace of lacking precision had been wiped out. None of the competitors can keep up with its naturalness. They all sound comparatively unemotional. If you haven't given Aesthetix your attention before, you should do so now at the latest.

Michael Lang

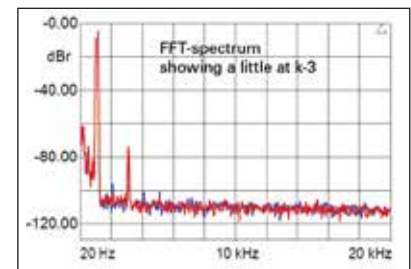
AESTHETIX MIMAS



from 7950 €
(available in silver and black;
phono- and dac-module optional,
each costing around 1000 euro)
Dimensions: 46x15x44cm (WxHxD)
Warranty: 2 years
Contact: Aesthetix Audio
+1 805-529-9901
info@aesthetix.net

Conclusion: The work of an expert. Sounds extremely emotional, yet very three-dimensional. Excellent workmanship. Expandable by phono and DAC module.

MEASUREMENT RESULTS



Continuous output (8 Ohm/40 Ohm) 181 W/261 W

Pulse output 4 Ohm (1 kHz) 338 W

Distortion factor at 50 mW/5 W/1 dB

max level 0.01 %/0.02 %/0.1 %

Intermodulation at 50 mW/5 W/1 dB

max level 0.02 %/0.006 %/0.05 %

Signal to noise ratio at 50 mW/5 W 71.2 dB/90.4 dB

Attenuation factor with 4 Ohm

(63 Hz/1 kHz/14 kHz) 33/33/40

Upper cut-off frequency (-3 dB/40 Ohm) >80 kHz

Crosstalk line 1 > line 2 79.5 dB

Synchronization fault volume at -60 dB 0.02 dB

Power consumption standby/idle 47 2 W/112 W



LAB COMMENT: Flawless performance in the lab, superior channel equality and crosstalk attenuation, very broad band, powerful. Low attenuation factor due to the circuitry.

FEATURES

Five RCA/XLR inputs each; pre out Cinch XLR; one pair of speakers with bananas or cable lugs; home cinema mode; headphone output; subwoofer output with switchable high-pass filters; LED display for input selection and volume, dimmable; remote control; metal remote control + 400 Euro; phono & DAC module each 1000 Euro

STEREO-TEST

SOUND QUALITY 98%

PRICE/PERFORMANCE



OUTSTANDING