



Denmark :

## Metrum Aurix

By: Kim Olsen

**The Dutch DAC manufacturer has committed to a Class A headphone amplifier, does it deliver on the same level as the company's DACs ?**

**Dutch Metrum Acoustics is best known for NOS DACs, as we have already tested. With them we were really happy. Now comes a headphone amplifier and it should of course be tested.**

**Metrum is not a major supporter of complicated modern devices. The amplifier is built in the same half-size casework as their Octave Mk II DAC. There is headphone jack, volume control and input selector. The rear panel offers a selection of two inputs and (quite brilliantly), also a set of output terminals that allow the signal to pass to another component.**

**Simple but effective.**



**It is reported that the amplifier runs in pure Class A without negative feedback. It uses two FET transistors and a step-up transformer. It can be used with up to 600 Ohm headphones. The distortion varies from 0.01% THD at 600 Ohm (6 volt output voltage) and up to 0.5% THD at 33 ohms (up to 2 volt output voltage). Signal to Noise ratio is quite acceptable at 120 dB. The protection circuit provides a slight delay when switching on but nothing is abnormal.**

**Supply is as simple as it can be and the product is both unassuming and simultaneously a discreet industrial design. The volume control provides good physical resistance that makes it possible to adjust the volume quite accurately. The gain is perceived as very strong.**

**Unfortunately the right size tool was not handy during the test and thus access inside to Aurix was not tried but the Internet is filled with images that strongly indicate that the manufacturer is telling the truth about the structure and component selection.**

**A variety of different types of headphones were tried, from various manufacturers, including both over ear and in ears from ADL, Sennheiser, AKG, Audio Technica and B & O.**

**Relatively easy to drive headphones like Grados RS2's, do not require turning up more than the 9 o'clock position to play very loud, whilst with AKG Q701, you are almost up to one o'clock position to achieve the same effect. The amplifier however at no time runs out of steam.**

**Aurix amplifier was tested with several DACs, however, primarily Metrum's own Octave Mk II.**

**Aesthetically Aurix is very discreet but still has a good quality feel due to its solid construction - but it wins no awards for modern and smart design. And so we like it.**

## **Sound ...**

**One of the first things noted was the good 3D effects and a good full sound with transparency, however without being dark or woolly.**

**On Alberte, "You love better" the bass is clear but without getting dark. And Alberte's voice has its recognizable bright sound. The style of play is open, detailed and quite dynamic.**

There are good dynamics and punch with Lulu's "The Man with the Golden Gun". The guitar has its real metal sound. Brass sounds are nicely placed and has an authentic "blown horn sound".

The instruments are well separated and treble voice has its own independent recording space, like the kind you can have in a studio recording. The recording is a little thick at the bottom, with a full-bodied and slightly dark character.

Aurix plays with excess and serenity, in the same manner as a high power amplifier.

It has an enormously detailed bass with fine decay on Dave Brubecks "Take Five". Pelvic sound will also be allowed to stand in full bloom throughout the track through. The highs make a transparent transition to the midrange which is liquid and natural and even the deepest bass is solid but consistent with the rest and keeps a good low end beat. The resolution and detail level is very high and you can, with luck hear some of the weak drum snare characters, which usually do not come through with lesser Amplifier / DAC combos.

Aurix's sound is linear and very well-resolved on the 24bit version of Metallica's "Ride the Lightning" album. Here Aurix conjures small details, small characters that might otherwise not be heard. The style of play provides a little bit of distance with sounds.



**Michael Jackson's "Beat It" is finely resolved with good dynamics, the details and the voices interact in the recording room even on each of the choral parts but still manages to be a part of the whole, which is quite impressive.**

**On the Valery Gergiev's version of Verdi's Requiem of "Dies Irae" - it all seems to come across great, especially the treble differentiation which is fully successful. Paukere and others are good, and quite satisfactorily reproduced ... as they should.**

**Aurix has a good ability to take a back seat. Headphones provide their own characteristics as an extra effect, whether they are additionally direct, open or have their own tonal signature.**

**Pink Floyd's "Marooned" is both very clean and dynamic and the metal sound especially of cymbals and guitar is quite impressive.**

**With Buena Vista Social Club's "Chan Chan," bass comes across very nuanced. The recording space as well. And the bass lines are allowed to be physically underlying components but still an integral part of the music. Its resolution and detail is revealed in totality, truly dynamic with good micro dynamic reproduction. Especially so, a little over 2 minutes into the track, this is really credible and a realistic presentation of the fullness and energy of impact they deserve.**

**The top end is slightly more open than the midrange and bass; which means that one can easily believe that Aurix will display many attributes from different headphones. How much difference you will be able to hear, depends on how much or how little transparency there is in their frequency range and not so much a matter of their tonal changes.**

## **Final points ...**

**A good headphone amplifier such as Aurix is not about your headphones, they come last and only they can ensure you hear every detail that is presented. Aurix does this with flying colours.**