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hi-fi+



Is the 90W Jadis I-88
the best integrated
valve amp yet?

August 2025

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GREAT DANE

You'd be barking mad to miss Aavik's new I-188 integrated amplifier!



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audio system



Aavik I-188

integrated amplifier

Chris Frankland

Part of the I-x88 series, the Aavik I-188 is an integrated Class D amplifier delivering 300 watts into 8 ohms, priced at £15,000. It lacks a streamer, DAC, tone controls, and any distracting features, focusing solely on being a high-quality amplifier. Above it is the I-288 at £20,000 and the I-588 at £25,000, both 300-watt Class D models. The top of the range is the I-880, a 200-watt Class A amplifier costing £67,000. There are also U- (Unity) variants featuring a built-in streamer and DAC. Aavik also produces pre- and power amplifiers, standalone DACs, streamers, and phono stages.

It's worth setting the scene, but apologies, *Hamlet* fans... nothing is rotten in the state of Denmark. There have never been so many European hi-fi brands imported into the UK, and Denmark contributes more than its fair share, with well-known names such as Audiovector, Dynaudio, Raidho, Gryphon, Peak, DALI, Jamo, and, indeed, B&O.

The Fab Four

You can add four more names to that list – Aavik, Børresen, Ansuz, and Axxess. These are all brands of Audio Group Denmark, which was founded at the end of 2020 by Lars Kristensen and Michael Børresen. The son of one of Denmark's first high-end audio retailers, Kristensen went on to manage his store and also worked for Nordost.

It was in his hi-fi shop that he first met Børresen, who was studying to become an engineer, and the two hit it off. Soon they developed amplifiers under the name Aavik and cables under the name Ansuz. Kristensen and Børresen concentrated on these brands starting in 2017, later adding the speaker brand Børresen. The Axxess brand was launched as an entry-level range into two-channel stereo.

In 2021, Flemming Rasmussen, the former owner of the Danish high-end hi-fi brand Gryphon, joined the team, and the Aavik I-188 reviewed here is the direct result of his collaboration with Børresen.





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» Aavik has paid particular attention to the various types of noise that can affect the performance of their amplifiers. Being a Class D design, which utilises modules purchased from Pascal, the transistors operate as switches rather than linear gain devices. The analogue signal is converted into a stream of pulses using pulse width modulation (PWM) and then reconverted with a low-pass filter after amplification. They are generally more efficient than Class AB or Class A amps, and Aavik told me they use Class D in the I-188 as it would have been impossible to fit a 300-watt Class AB amp in the case, adding that they believe using Class AB “would most likely provide no benefits to audio quality”.

The I-188 uses what Aavik calls a resonant mode power supply. Class D amplifiers typically have switch-mode power supplies, which can generate high-frequency noise. Aavik says their supply “adjusts its frequency to increase power density, ensuring high peak currents without distortion” and is much quieter than a conventional switch-mode power supply.

It's Tesla time

Any high-frequency noise from the power supply and the PWM conversion circuits is managed by what Aavik refers to as Tesla coils, strategically placed at key points in the circuitry. They are also employed to filter out any noise captured by the wiring.

These Tesla coils comprise two spirals. The idea is that any noise component creating a magnetic field in one

coil will also produce one in the opposite direction in the counter-wound coil, which they claim cancels each other out. Some Tesla coils are active and generate pulsating signals at specific frequencies, sent in anti-phase, and are said to “significantly amplify the music signal and eliminate the background noise floor.” The I-188 has a total of 132 Tesla coils. More advanced models use even more Tesla coils.

The materials used in the amplifier case are also selected to help isolate the internal circuitry from external interference, both electrical and physical. In the I-188, the chassis is a laminate construction of stainless steel, MDF, and copper, with the copper layers on the inside creating a 360-degree internal shield. These materials were chosen for their ability to “prevent magnetic, resonant and microphonic impacts.”

As you move up the range, models begin to use some more exotic materials, such as titanium, tungsten, and zirconium. Aavik also cryogenically treats specific components and parts, which is known to improve the crystalline structure of metals, but not in the I-188.

Grip and gusto

So much for the technology inside the Aavik I-188, but will it pay off in terms of sound quality? To test this, I connected the I-188 to a pair of Russell K Red 150Se floorstanding speakers, and for my source, I used an Audio Note CDT-Five CD transport and DAC 5 Special. I also used an





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» Audio Note TT3/PSU3/Arm Two/Io1 front end, connected through an S9 transformer, and a Gold Note PH-5/PSU-5 phono stage.

The Aavik was a pleasure to use. It has only a volume control and input selector on the front panel, and the display is bright and clear, though you can dim it or turn it off if you prefer. The volume control turns smoothly and freely, inspiring confidence. The build quality and finish are excellent. On the back, there are five line-level RCA inputs, an RCA pre-out that can be used for a separate subwoofer or power amplifier, and a primary input that allows you to operate just the power amplifier section with a separate preamplifier.

To familiarise myself with the I-188, I started with the instrumental 'Being With You' from George Benson's *In Your Eyes* album. Here, I was struck by the presence, sharpness, and clarity of the Fender Rhodes piano in the intro. Benson's guitar was also well-voiced, and his melodic, soulful tone and quick-fingered technique were well captured.

Next up was 'Sunny Side of the Street' from singer/songwriter/piano player Ben Sidran's *Enivré d'Amour* CD. This track features a beautiful bass line that exudes a distinct swagger, and Aavik conveyed that with control and poise. Meanwhile, Sidran's DX7 synth had great leading-edge bite and presence. His vocals were expressive and articulate, and percussion had good detail and syncopation. The track moved well, and the Aavik sounded clean, detailed, dynamic and rhythmically sharp.

I am a big fan of guitarist Peter White and love his signature sound, so I was eager to listen to his cover of Johnny Nash's 'I Can See Clearly Now' from his *Groovin'* album. From the outset, keyboards and percussion were sharp and syncopated, and White's acoustic guitar was rich with subtle nuances that highlight his technique. The lilting, reggae-style bass line that supports and propels it was also tight, tuneful and controlled on the Aavik. Overall, it was an excellent performance.

Randy Crawford has a superb voice, and I just had to listen to the beautiful ballad 'You Bring the Sun Out' from her *Secret Combination* album. The strings in the introduction were very well presented with plenty of space around them, the piano was open and detailed, but it was her voice I wanted to focus on – her excellent diction and enunciation, where you can hear the final 't' on 'you bring the sun out' and the final 'p' on 'to warm my life up'. The Aavik captured that well.

Returning to the jazz genre, I listened to guitarist Larry Carlton's superb instrumental cover of the Doobie Brothers' 'Minute by Minute' from his *Discovery* album. This track features a wonderful, sinuous bass line that propels the piece forward, and Aavik conveyed that with excellent grip and enthusiasm. Carlton's impressive guitar technique was also effectively captured; the saxophone solo was well voiced, and the track flowed smoothly and made musical sense.

I then played the track 'Westward' from the Eric Marienthal/Chuck Loeb *Bridges* CD. It features one of the most wonderfully complex, syncopated, and delicate percussion parts you could ever hope to hear, and this was well conveyed by the Aavik – delicate, detailed and dynamic. Marienthal's saxophone was well-voiced, and his remarkable technique was effectively captured, as was Loeb's skilled guitar playing.

The Aavik I-188 impressed me from the first few bars of the initial track I played. It has a clean, detailed, dynamic and highly musical sound, and at no point during my listening did it detract from my enjoyment of the music. It offers excellent insights into what each musician is playing and how, and brings them all together as a musically coherent whole. It is beautifully made, easy to operate, and has more than enough power for any room or speaker setup; I wholeheartedly recommend it. +

Technical specifications

Type: Class D integrated amplifier

Inputs: Five RCA unbalanced line inputs, RCA power amp in

Outputs: Unbalanced preamp/subwoofer output, one pair of speaker binding posts

Power output: 300W into 8 ohms, 600W into 4 ohms

Frequency response: not quoted

THD: 0.0028% (1W, 1kHz, 8 ohms)

Total intermodulation distortion: 0.002% (10W, 8 ohms)

Dimensions (WxHxD): 440mm x 117.8mm x 393.5mm

Weight: 23.3kg

Price: £15,000, €15,000, \$20,000

Manufacturer Audio Group Denmark

🌐 www.audiogroupdenmark.com

UK distributor Signature Audio Systems

🌐 www.signaturesystems.com ☎ +44(0)1959 569842

High-performance electronics are essential for high-quality music playback



Minimum Noise – Maximum Musicality

Every product in the Aavik ranges reflect our promise of delivering electronic devices that render music with authenticity, nerve and precision.

We believe that mechanically rigid enclosures, strong focus on noise rejection, meticulously crafted individual circuit stages and power supplies, create spectacular results in an aesthetically pleasing sleek design that is neither visually intimidating nor overwhelming.

By incorporating multiple highly unique technological advancements in all Aavik designs, we leave music lovers with an extraordinary listening experience

"What impressed me most was the incredible sense of realism and immediacy. The synergy between their brands delivered a presentation that was both effortlessly natural and deeply engaging. I will never forget the Paul McCartney vocal on 'And I Love Her'."

- Marc Fanthorpe, Fanthorpes in Hull





FOUR Brands. **ONE** Philosophy.
ENDLESS Musical Experiences.



UNMATCHED MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

The impressive Børresen loudspeaker range is the result of a singular vision: to transcend conventional audio by crafting groundbreaking technologies that render music with authenticity, nerve, musicality and precision.

All to give music lovers an extraordinary listening experience with such intensity that they no longer see the speakers standing in front of them.

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Børresen



Ansuz Sortz Gen. 3 - Noise Reduction



Ansuz Sparkz Gen. 3 - Noise Reduction



Ansuz Darkz Gen. 3 - Resonance Control



Ansuz Cables Gen. 3

SONIC DETAILS UNHEARD OF

The extensive Ansuz range is developed with **Noise Reduction**, **Mechanical Grounding** and **Resonance Control** in mind. Even in the best systems, vibrations, mechanical noise and interference from the outlets need to be drastically reduced or eliminated. If not, the sound performance will lack clarity and precision resulting in a blunt musical experience without nerve and authenticity.

The Ansuz line of products include ultra high-end cables, power and ethernet distributors, as well as devices for resonance control and noise reduction.

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Axxess L3
Loudspeakers

Axxess Forté
Streaming amplifier

Axxess
Power Distributor

Axxess
Cable loom

Axxess Noir
Resonance Control



Bringing People Closer to the Music

The Axxess series is a more affordable and less complex Hi-Fi system based the technologies and design principles used in the highly claimed Aavik, Børresen and Ansuz brands. However, the sound quality is significantly beyond what their retail price would suggest.

Naturally, the full Axxess lineup works in perfect harmony. However, clever engineering guarantees that each product performs equally well when integrated into other systems.

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