

AUDIO FILE

Integrated amplifier. Rated at 30W/8ohm
 Made by: Luxman Corp., Japan
 Supplied by: IAG (International Audio Group), UK
 Telephone: 01480 447700
 Web: www.iaguk.com; www.luxman.com
 Price: £6995



Luxman L-590AXII

This beast of an integrated amplifier, the £6995 L-590AXII, certainly merits your attention and it can be used as a preamp or power amp by activating the button labelled 'separates', next to 'direct' – which bypasses the balance and tone control circuitry.

Luxman's 30W/ch rating may apply only to its billing as a Class A amp as this is no 30-watter in its real-world behaviour. But sheer power will not be why you'll fall in

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love with the L-590AXII. No, you'll want this for the same reason that people buy retro-inspired cars. It's bursting with the features and virtues that we enjoyed in hi-fi until ultra-minimalism came to rule.

It features everything that you need bar a DAC to serve as the heart of a system, with a comprehensive remote and all of those conveniences some of us miss elsewhere, like a mono selector, bass and treble controls, MM/MC phono stage, subsonic filter and loudness control – all of which have their uses, even if outside of 'serious' listening sessions.

And Luxman has engineered a separate headphone amplifier too

– which drove a collection of Focals and Beyers and various vintage Sennheisers with ease.

RCAs are fitted for four line inputs and phono, with an earthing post, as well as two balanced XLR inputs (rear sockets have their own protective covers). Other terminals account for record-out, monitor-in and pre-out, and two remote output connections for integration with AV systems. Meanwhile, its two pairs of speaker binding posts accept spades, bare wire or banana plugs.

Then there are those two VU meters, a feature that makes us swoon when we see Nagras, McIntoshes and products from others who know that their allure vastly out-sexes LEDs. They may not be 'lab accurate', but they look great!

FOCUSED SPACES

We dipped straight into vinyl, using the rather fine internal phono stage with the Clearaudio Goldfinger [HFN Jan '15] on an SME 30/12 deck [HFN Mar '11]. And the first LP told us more about the Luxman in one track than we could have imagined.

Raucous, rousing and unrefined, 'Somebody To Love' from Jefferson Airplane's *Surrealistic Pillow* [Mobile Fidelity] is mono but it was revealing of the Luxman's prowess. The attack of the percussion was relentless, but the staggering element was

ABOVE: Nothing about the L-590AXII says '2016' as once-lost features are revived – headphone socket, phono stage, VU meters, A+B speakers, rec out, tone controls... welcome back!

the power of Grace Slick's vocal. For the Luxman, it was a test to separate the sounds in a mono recording, and give each its head. The slithery guitar against that trashy snare, the pounding bass, and a vocal quavering with rage – it was appropriate that this 49-year-old song sounded so fresh through an amplifier that thinks it's still the Summer of Love.

But as this is emphatically a stereo amplifier it was incumbent on us to feed it with something exhibiting glorious two-channel majesty. We chose to lose ourselves in 'Concierto de Aranjuez' from Miles Davis's sublime *Sketches Of Spain* [Mobile Fidelity]. The spread across the room was gloriously wide, the brass focused yet filling sufficient space, while those tell-tale castanets enjoyed their own turf, crisp, clicky, and wooden.

CDs were used for testing the line inputs, the Marantz DV8300 SACD/DVD player serving nicely to deliver butt-kicking hard rock via Twisted Sister's 'We're Not Gonna Take It' [Big Hits And Nasty Cuts; Atlantic]. And Dee Snider's snarl, scarily vicious guitar, pounding percussion? Check.

Gorgeous mono recorded in Capitol's studios in the 1950s, Mickey Katz's 'Duvid Crockett' on *Now That Sounds Kosher!* [Shout! Factory] sparkled too, especially the vibes, while the brass cut through the air with surgical precision.

VERDICT

The real bliss provided by Luxman's L-590AXII is how it lets you return to hi-fi's Golden Age, while producing sound to match modern criteria. We'd even buy the amplifier for the looks and retro features alone. ☺

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	95W / 165W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	97W / 180W / 303W / 170W
Output impedance (20Hz–20kHz)	0.023–0.051ohm
Freq. response (20Hz–20kHz/100kHz)	–0.04dB to –0.22dB/–4.45dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/30W/90W)	19mV / 105mV / 185mV
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/30W/90W)	84.8dB / 99.6dB / 104.3dB
Distortion (20Hz–20kHz re. 10W/8ohm)	0.0011–0.035%
Power consumption (Idle/Max. o/p)	218W / 350W (1W, standby)
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	440x193x463mm / 28.4kg