



Aurender A1000

Aurender makes servers. Its first product, some 15 years ago, was a hard-drive-based server designed by the company's founder Harry Lee, an engineer and music lover who was dissatisfied with existing music server options then available, which were largely computer-based, and didn't take the needs of audio delivery into account, he thought. So he built one that did.

Aurender's ongoing models added DACs and analogue outputs to the servers, and simultaneously developed the ability to stream from the new online music services, as well as from file storage within the home. So the A1000 is both a streamer and a server — and a DAC with optical, coaxial, USB-B and HDMI ARC inputs, providing analogue outputs,

One key to their claimed musicality has been Aurender's buffering of music: the caching of files to internal memory before playback, or via RAM for streaming services, with the goal of reducing jitter, latency and

mechanical noise, even able to cope with any temporary streaming glitches.

But equally crucial has been Aurender's complete control over both the hardware and the software engineering of its products.

Here at *Sound+Image* we've long been a little shy of consumer servers (in both the video and audio sectors) just because of the hard drives. Traditional HDDs can all too easily fail, and after four or five years their failure rates rise dramatically. But now we have solid-state storage, SSD: far more reliable, especially in the longer-term, though more expensive. In the A1000 you can install an SSD drive up to 8TB — bring your own unless you arrange this with your hi-fi dealer. We installed a little 500GB 2.5-inch SSD drive; it slotted in seconds into the screw-shut rear compartment, and once formatted, we had a reliable 434.55GB to load up with fine tunes. (You would still want to maintain a back-up.)

There is Spotify Connect, Tidal Connect, and now Qobuz Connect, AirPlay, Google

Cast, and UPnP file playback from NAS drives, also a potentially bit-perfect method of playback. And all these will benefit from that RAM buffering to allow glitch-free jitter-controlled playback by the Aurender. Finally there's Bluetooth: the codecs are stated as "up to aptX HD". Aurender's own Conductor app provides easy and attractive control of it all.

Aurender's server products go far more expensive than this, yet we were absolutely thrilled with the A1000's sound quality, so clearly a low-noise environment: audiophiles are often parodied for describing an 'inky-black noise floor', but you know what they mean when you hear it, and we heard it here: an impossible silence delivered behind piano and vocals, a sense of purity in everything, the music in the middle real and ravishing. Aurender's A1000 is a server and a streamer which proved a bringer of music and joy, whether streaming Spotify from the internet or caching high-res files from its internal SSD drive-bay. An instant award-winner.

JUDGES' **“** COMMENT

“A preamplifier for digital inputs, a streamer for music services, a buffering server for your own music files, all at exceptional audiophile levels of music reproduction.”

Price: \$6495. More information: synergyaudio.com