

OH, YOU SORCERESS!

It is very easy to like Aavik's new series of electronics. And if your vision is no longer 20/20, yet your hearing is that much better, then that is of no consequence.

Words: [Roy Ervin Solstad](#)

Photos: Roy Ervin Solstad and Aavik

It is sometimes claimed that if one of the senses is impaired, then one of the other senses will often be enhanced to compensate. I have no idea whether it is simply a myth that people with poor eyesight have better hearing, but it seems as if Aavik may have been thinking along those lines with its new 180, 280 and 580 series.

Whatever the reasoning, the aim is to give you fantastic sound, whilst at the same time enabling you to read what is on the display without a pair of binoculars – even at a great distance from the products.

In the “old” days, Aavik was best known as a manufacturer of audio and video racks, but several years ago the name popped up again as a producer of high-end amplifiers based on class D technology. Behind the revitalised Aavik Acoustics are, among others, Michael Børresen and Lars Kristensen, two Danes with extremely comprehensive CVs within hi-fi production and development. Incidentally, the two men are also behind Ansuz, which produces cables and power filters, and Børresen, which produces loudspeakers.

Different series

Today Aavik produces several different series, with the 380 series having attracted the most attention to date. This is due in part to an extremely attractive

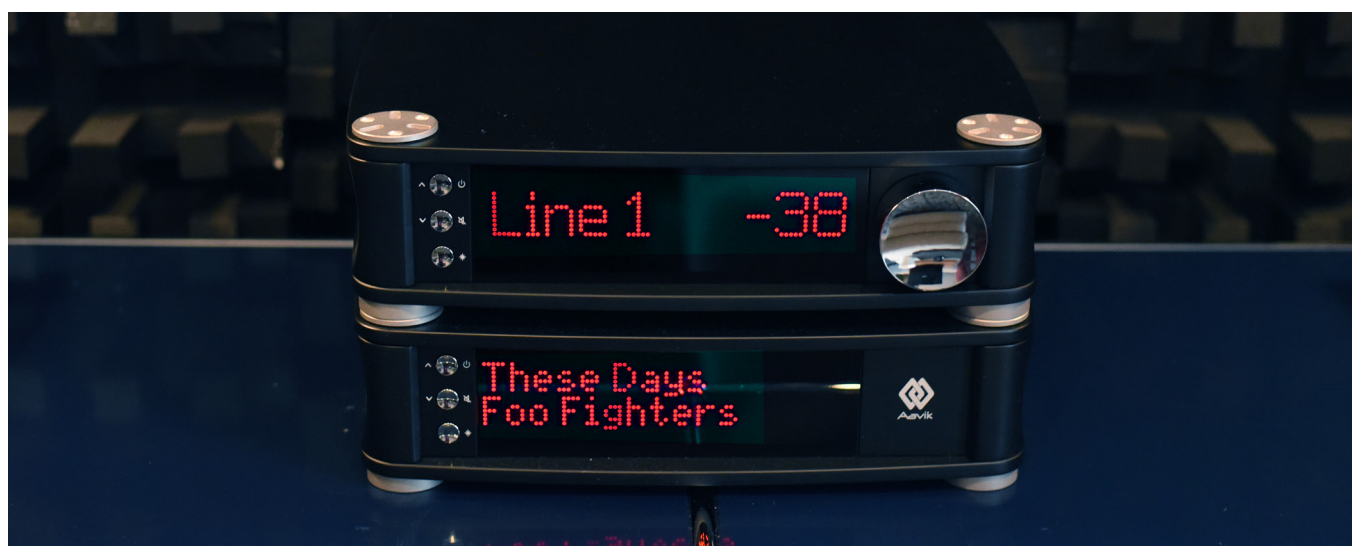
design which enables the products in the series to distinguish themselves from the majority of other products on the market. In short, you can immediately see that it is an Aavik product.

Slightly less striking is the 150 series, which, from what we gather, is due to be phased out to make way for the new 180 series. Both of the original series featured integrated amplifier and preamplifier and power amplifier. The 380 series also had mono power amplifiers.

Both the integrated amplifiers and the preamplifiers had built-in digital converters. The 380 series also had a built-in phonograph amplifier for both MM and MC pickups.

Separate components

The new 180, 280 and 580 series differ from their predecessors in several areas. First of all, Aavik has realised that customers that buy expensive hi-fi are not concerned about putting as much as possible into a box. If you need a digital converter or phono amplifier, then you have to buy it separately, as the amplifiers are line amplifiers only. For the time being, the new series does not have separate amplifier solutions; only integrated amplifiers are available, but each series has a streamer, digital converter or phonograph amplifier (RIAA stage).





Incidentally, the streamers have a built-in digital converter, but do not have digital inputs. You will thus need the extra digital converter if you have digital sources other than streaming. It is perhaps a little strange that the specifications of the integrated amplifiers look absolutely identical on paper. All the products can be “stacked” on top of each other. Tiny titanium balls are used which are placed in pre-cut grooves between the components.

I-180

As is the case for I-280 and I-580, I-180 is an integrated amplifier with line inputs only. There are five of these and they are all unbalanced. There is also a preamplifier output, which can be connected to a headphone amplifier, subwoofers or an external power amplifier if this is required for whatever reason. All of the inputs have the possibility of gain adjustment, such that you can level out the volume regardless of whether the signals to the amplifier vary in strength. You can also use one of the inputs as a home theatre bypass if you wish to connect the stereo system to your home theatre setup. In this case, you can also adjust the gain individually on the HT bypass input.

The remote control is of the Apple type and controls most of what you need, such as input source, volume, mute and other menu options.

The amplifier produces 300 Watts per channel at 8 Ohms and twice as much at 4 Ohms, and has a coup-

le of speaker terminals on the rear.

The front is dominated by the large display on which the text characters are extremely large, and an attractive volume knob on the right. The display can be dimmed, but it is actually very nice to be able to see what is written on the display from the listening position. Although the passage of time means that my eyesight is not what it used to be, with Aavik products in the rack, I felt almost like a young man again with the visual acuity of a falcon.

The cabinet is identical for all the products: 40 cm wide, around 38 cm deep and just over 10 cm high. As a result, you cannot gauge from the amplifier's appearance whether it is a 180, 280 or 580 when in the rack. However, if you pick it up, the difference becomes tangible: while the 180 amplifier weighs 8.8 kg, the next model up weighs around one kg more, with another kilogram being added to the top model. The difference is thus in the power supply to the amplifiers, with Aavik using components such as Tesla Coils in order to realise a lower noise floor. It is quite simply the number of noise-reducing components that differentiates the three models: I-180 has 36 active Tesla Coils, 96 active Square Tesla Coils, five dither circuits and four Anti Areal Resonance Coils; for the 280 model, the specifications are 72, 168, eight and four; whilst the I-580 has no less than 108, 240, eleven and four respectively.

According to Michael Børresen, these help to curb high-frequency noise.



- The background becomes blacker and it is easy to hear, explains Børresen to Stereo+ by phone.

Aavik has also chosen to price all products in each series identically, such that amplifier, streamer, digital converter and phono amplifier each cost NOK 69,000 kroner, NOK 110,000 and NOK 220,000 respectively depending on the series. A complete setup can therefore range from NOK 276,000 to NOK 880,000 in price. Of course you can combine the products from the three series without any problem, since they look absolutely identical.

S-180

The streamer is controlled by its own app called Aavik Stream Control. You can connect to Tidal, Qobuz, Spotify and any NAS server or hard drive connected directly to the streamer, or a USB key.

The app is Aavik's version of mConnect, so if you have used mConnect earlier, you will recognise everything on the Aavik app. The disadvantage of the Aavik app at present is that it is not available for Android, in which case you can just use mConnect, where the only thing missing is the Aavik logo in the app.

Roon Ready certification for S-180 is just around the corner. When this is in place, you will of course be able to use this instead of the Aavik app or mConnect. You cannot connect external digital sources to it directly, however, although it is possible to use an external converter, as there are outputs for both optical cables and coax cables.

The analogue output is unbalanced with RCA terminals. This can also be controlled by its own accompanying Apple remote control.

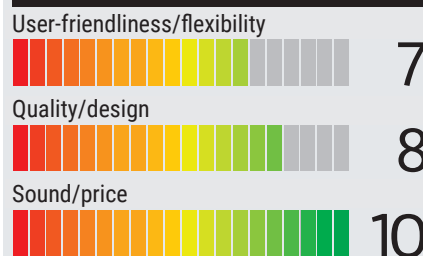
WE LIKE:

- Lots of power
- Excellent sound
- Attractive design

WE DO NOT LIKE:

- No balanced inputs
- Line amplifier only

RATINGS:



Aavik Acoustics I-180

PRICE:	NOK 69,000
IMPORTER:	Mala Audio
LINK:	www.malaudio.no

Sound

Connecting this system is extremely straightforward. A signal cable between amplifier and streamer, an Ethernet cable inserted into the streamer, speaker cables and then power cables to each of the components. Then it is just a question of finding some music and away you go.

I must admit that I was very keen to hear the system in action. Børresen and Kristensen have produced very good products earlier, but the cost of these products has often been eye-wateringly high.

The question is whether Aavik is able to deliver even when the price is within the range of a lot more customers – well, the answer is a resounding yes. The sound is quite simply fantastic. The tone balance is probably a touch on the dark side, although this is not the same as saying that the treble is weak. In fact, it is somewhat reminiscent of class A signature with great depth that makes it particularly good for vocals. On Josh Turner's excellent track A Country State of Mind, the vocal sounds incredibly good. Turner's voice has plenty of inherent depth, and the Aavik system picks

out depth, details and dynamics. It sounds so good that it almost makes you want to listen to the whole album.

The acoustic image is expansive and precise, almost as if it was being played on a valve amplifier. Instruments and vocalists are accurately reproduced in terms of both depth and breadth, which contributes to enhancing the illusion that this is "the real thing".

The cymbals on John Martyn's Heaven and Earth are pin sharp and have lots of energy, which puts to bed the idea that the amplifier rolls off particularly early in the treble. They are light at the top of the range, with plenty of air between the different sounds down through the frequencies.

There are probably amplifiers that are a touch more transparent, which results in even more microdetails and microdynamics, but I think you will be hard pushed to find a combination with such huge amounts of power and yet so much finesse as Aavik I-180 in this price bracket.

Even on my power-hungry speakers, I-180 has an iron-fisted grip on the elements, and it seems as if the

NORSKAUDIOTEKNIKK

- Allnic
- Anthony Gallo
- Bergmann Audio
- Bladelius
- Cayin
- ClearAudio
- Devialet
- ELAC
- Esprit
- Furutech
- Kimber
- Lab12
- Magnepan
- Marantz
- Mytek
- Ortofon
- Parasound
- PMC
- ProAc
- Rega
- SolidTech
- Transparent Audio
- Vivid Audio



26 ÅR MED PERSONLIGE HIFI-LEVERANSER - KONTAKT OSS I DAG!

Norsk Audio Teknikk AS

Ullevålsveien 13, 0165 Oslo • Tlf: 22 20 00 95 • morten@norskaudioteknikk.no
Facebook: NorskAudioTeknikk • www.norskaudioteknikk.no



amplifier never runs out of steam, even when I really crank up the volume. This also enables you to hear how much “oomph” there is in the bass. I’ve probably heard amplifiers that are slightly more direct in terms of the bass, but I-180 exhibits a very good compromise between attack and depth. It is not so sterile and anaemic at low frequency that it sounds dull, but neither is there so much depth at low frequencies that it becomes vague and undefined, and thus also dull.

Perhaps, however, it is the homogeneity that is the single most impressive aspect. The sound is completely seamless throughout the entire frequency range. There is not one single area that stands out – either for better or for worse. Dynamics, detail, transparency and richness of tone are identical from the deepest bass to the brightest treble. As a pure streamer, the S-180 is also highly impressive in terms of sound. It has a depth and control in style which is really addictive. It is certainly not nearly twice as good as my own Matrix Element X streamer and digital converter, which cost just under NOK 40,000. But it is better, and is certainly a better match to I-180 – and not just in terms of appearance.

Basically, I am really impressed, and wondered what could be gained by stepping up to the next level. I therefore borrowed an I-280 for a few days, and the great sound I had heard on the entry model was still there in full. However, improvements could be detected in the two areas I have already mentioned: there is even better attack and directness down through the bass and the sound is even more transparent on the I-280. The difference was not night and day, but still easy to hear. Nevertheless, having listened to the mid-range model, there is almost even more reason to brag about how good the entry model is. You get at least 90 percent of the sound for scarcely 60 percent of the cost.

Conclusion

An incredibly good system with an amplifier that can bring any speaker to life. This is not only a question of muscle power, however, as there is enough finesse to satisfy the vast majority. Warmly recommended.

WE LIKE:

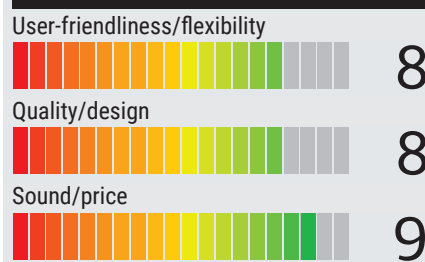
- Lots of power
- Excellent sound
- Attractive design

WE DO NOT LIKE:

- No balanced inputs
- Line amplifier only

STEREO+ SAYS: A brilliant system that provides high-end sound without completely breaking the bank.

RATINGS:



Stereo+ 8,5

VERY GOOD

Aavik Acoustics S-180

Aavik Acoustics S-180

PRICE: NOK 69,000

IMPORTER: Mala Audio

LINK: www.malaaudio.no