

HiFi

einsnull

Magazin für digitales HiFi

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SERVICE**Besserer Klang aus dem Netz**

- Neue Funktionen und verbesserter Sound durch Updates
- So bleiben Ihre Geräte auf dem neuesten Stand
- Gestestet: Hard-/Softwareupdates für Audiodata und Auralic **s.76**

**Ein DAC für alle Quellen**

- High-End-Wandler mit 17 Eingängen
- Profi-Technik mit DSD-Unterstützung **s.38**

**Streamingfähiger Vollverstärker**

- Die Komplettlösung fürs Wohnzimmer
- Streaming, Bluetooth, analog **s.10**

**DAC-Vorstufe mit 7-Band Equalizer**

Streaming mit voller Klangkontrolle

- Klangoptimierung auf höchstem Niveau
- Verarbeitet digitale und analoge Quellen
- DSP mit vielen Optionen **s.42**

**Edler Musikserver mit Vorstufe**

- Aufwendiger Ladder-DAC • Hervorragender Klang **s.22**

Aktivboxen der Referenzklasse

- Exklusives Aluminiumgehäuse • Jeder Treiber einzeln verstärkt **s.48**

**Funktionswunder im Kleinformat**

- Mini-Streamer für nur 500 Euro
- Quelle, DAC und Vorverstärker integriert **s.16**



Streamer

DAC

Preamplifier

The Chosen One

Multifunctional HiFi devices that can undertake more than one task are now clearly the trend. CAAS therefore offers the next evolutionary stage of its server.



Peripherals:

- Sources: Integrita Audiophile Musicserver
Melco N1A
TIDAL
- Final Stage: Bryston 4B SST²
- Loud Speaker: KLANG+TON „Nada“



Heard:

- **Lizz Wright**
Freedom & Surrender
(FLAC, 96 kHz, 24 Bit)
- **Steve Winwood**
Back in the High Life
(TIDAL, 44,1 kHz, 16 Bit)
- **This Wild Life**
Clouded
(FLAC, 96 kHz, 24 Bit)
- **Helge Lien Trio**
Badgers and Other Beings
(FLAC, 192 kHz, 24 Bit)
- **Incubus**
Make Yourself
(FLAC, 44,1 kHz, 16 Bit)
- **Deep Purple**
Made in Japan (Deluxe)
(FLAC, 96 kHz, 24 Bit)



There is a tendency in our industry to utilize the concept of high-end a little excessively, because ultimately every developer and every manufacturer wants to be up there with the leaders. However, the top line-up of audio playback is now an exclusive group by definition, which should certainly always resonate in the term used.

High-end should not be something ordinary, it should offer something special and may also cost a little more; criteria which not all manufacturers represent well. It is even more pleasing when you finally are faced with the true meaning of the word as you unpack a device. That is what happened with the Elysian Audio Server by CAAS.



A true Class-A amplifier module is used in the pre-amplifier stage, which can adjust the volume in 128 individual steps



Digital data from the streamer is routed via I²S to the separately operating DAC Board. The two parallel DAC chips deliver great sound



Three transformers mounted in the EAS, provide power to each one of the boards, Streamer, DAC and pre-amplifier

With Kodi Remote App Apple devices can be used as a remote control



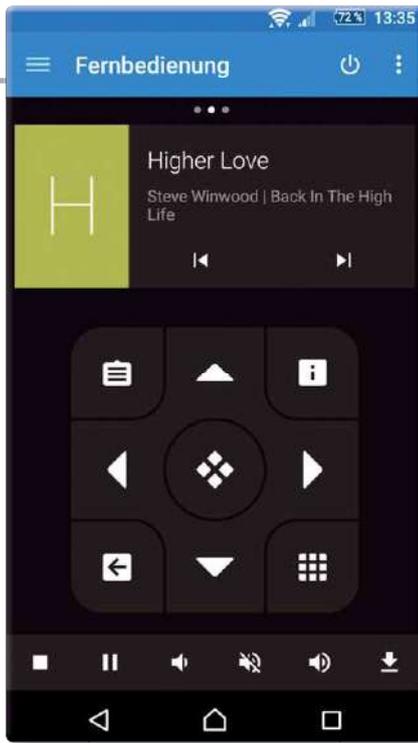
The company CAAS from North Yorkshire, England has been building high quality audio equipment since 2006, such as the Digital Audio Server [DAS] which has already been tested in the HiFi Einsnull 6/2014. Now we are reviewing the larger of the two models the Elysian Audio Server [EAS] which, as the full title suggests, has a certain aura of exclusivity. The name Elysian refers to an island in ancient Greek mythology, where the ones chosen by the gods spent their afterlife. One is therefore in exclusive circles.

The Elysian arrived in our Duisburg editorial office and I unpacked it. If the DAS is relatively small and portable, its 'big brother' displays the hifi-standard dimensions. Also, the weight is significantly higher and quite remarkable at about eight kilograms. The housing, which absolutely can be described as high-end, is responsible for a large part of the mass. Milled out of a single piece of aluminium, the metal case of the EAS impresses with its absolutely smooth, glossy surfaces without any surface joints. The front is slightly curved in order to make the device a little less stern-looking.

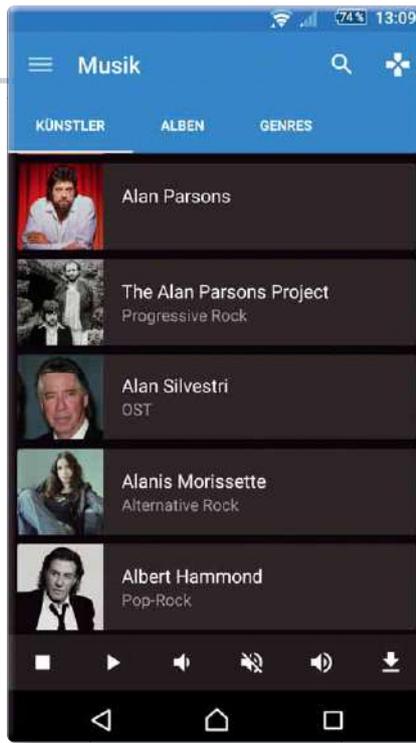
The main elements of the EAS are located along the curve. In the centre, also manufactured from solid aluminium, is a large volume control, framed by buttons for the standby mode and the source selection. Besides the status light on the left side, four more small LEDs indicate the current mode of the EAS.

Thanks to the outstanding, but not too playful designs and the choice of materials, the EAS is simply really nice to look at. The surface feel of the device itself is beyond reproach, while the volume control dial also offers a pleasant resistance when operating.

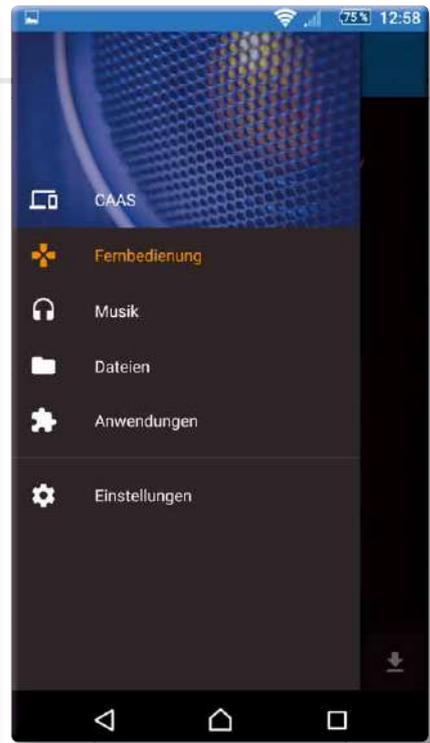
The EAS is not intended only for the pure delight of its optical intricacies. Within the system, the device certainly fulfils other purposes as well. First, we are talking about a source device, which can play music from network storage, USB sticks and hard drives. The necessary connections are given in the form of a network port and four USB-A connectors on the rear panel. When using USB memory devices, one should make sure to use either mass storage or external hard disks with its own power supply, because the



The proprietary app can be used as a remote control



The artists photographs are downloaded from the Internet and provide a record store-Feeling



Your own library, the folder browser or the remote control can be chosen from the side menu

connections are not designed to provide hard drives with power via the communication cable. The main focus is clearly the streaming function of the EAS, which can be controlled in three different ways.

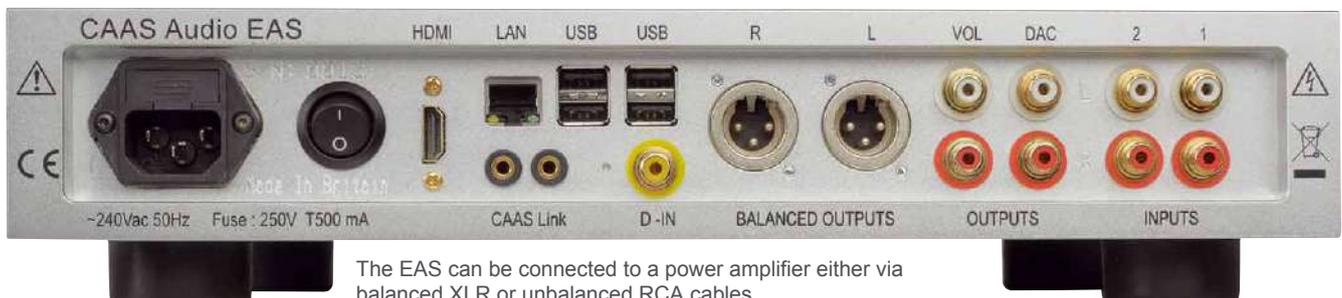
A bit unusual but not entirely unknown, the EAS can be connected via an HDMI cable to a TV. Since the server itself does not have a remote control, the TV remote control is used to control the device. The prerequisite is that the respective TV supports the so-called CEC system, which now almost any modern brand televisions should. The XBMC, which now bears the name Kodi and thus should be familiar to all users of a Raspberry Pi, will be displayed on the screen. This is no coincidence, because CAAS, like some other manufacturers, utilizes a small mini computer as a central

processing unit. The interface of the EAS is however, completely designed for audio so that access to all connected network storages and read-only memory is available from there. These can be accessed either through the browser or a specifically imported library where all the tracks are also provided with additional information and images furnished by the EAS from the Internet. Thus, the wallpaper is designed to fit each artist or album and even missing or incorrect metadata can be supplemented and replaced that way. With a large library, the acquisition process can take a little while but through some updates and corrections by CAAS, the operating system of the EAS and DAS now runs much more stable than last winter. It is here that the comments of the press and customers have really been taken

to heart, very nice.

Because the operating system of RasPi is open source, all professional and hobby developers are free to develop plug-ins for the device in order to provide even more functionality. For example, the Lossless streaming service TIDAL is already available through such a plug-in via the EAS, so one can rely not only on their own but also on millions more titles.

Those who do not want to fiddle with the TV remote, but prefer to sit on the couch with a smartphone or tablet can also do that. For Apple iOS devices, the XBMC / Kodi-Remote app can be utilized, which can also be used with the on-screen menu and of course offers much more specific menu buttons. There is also the possibility for the EAS to operate completely without a television - "headless".



The EAS can be connected to a power amplifier either via balanced XLR or unbalanced RCA cables



The four input LEDs sit right next to the button for the source selection

The music library, as well as the network storage, is displayed directly on the tablet, so that albums, tracks and playlists can be selected here. During our tests of the DAS this was the only way to control the server without a monitor, so that Android users had to rely on the TV. Meanwhile however, CAAS has developed its own app that works on devices with the popular Google operating system. Of course one can remotely control the menu on a television, but the headless use of the EAS is also possible. Thanks to the information downloaded from the internet, a personal library is really nicely arranged with the matching images either by artist, album or genre.



The made in Britain is engraved into the aluminium case

One can alternate here with a flick of the finger, between the tracks, back and forth and the browser folder can also be accessed here. Only when using TIDAL one must unfortunately still refrain, since the plug-in has not yet been integrated into the app although the app is really modern and neatly designed. Controls such as play, pause, and continue remain displayed at the bottom of the screen so that they remain available at all times. There is also a key for source selection because, in addition to its function as a streamer, the EAS can do much more. Just like with the DAS, an excellent R2R-ladder-DAC Board is used which uses two parallel working chips. The converter module is connected via CAAS custom developed I²S interface in which each incoming signal is completely re-clocked. Through a coaxial S / PDIF input on the back, external digital source devices can also use the elaborately designed converter section. Therefore both compressed and uncompressed PCM formats can be processed which may have a maximum resolution of 96 kHz. Music that is processed directly by the EAS can even be resolved up to 192 kHz at 24-bit; tracks with lower sampling rates can be automatically up-sampled.

But here is the core of the EAS and the big difference to its little brother. In addition to a Streamer and DAC, there is also an integrated pre-amplifier. However, this is not a digital volume control, but a real class A module, that can accept up to two analogue sources via RCA jacks. The volume can be controlled in 128 steps via the control dial, as well as with TV remote control or app control. Here, the CAAS app even offers the really convenient option to use the volume keys of the smartphones or tablets, whereupon the potentiometer immediately sets in motion on the front panel.

The combination of source, converter and preamp also makes it possible to use the server directly with a pair of powered speakers to build up a versatile yet slender system. All this adds up to a sound experience that can again really be described as high-end. Thanks to the excellent Ladder-DAC, the EAS plays incredibly fresh and natural. The server readily shows its musical abilities in classical or jazz music, where the good dynamic scope in connection with the space generates a great virtual stage. Thanks to the really beautifully detailed resolution, every change of the grip on the double bass or guitar can be heard and one can almost think they hear the musicians breathe. But the server does not only dominate the delicate sounds. Music of the harder type also retains the necessary bracing touch in order to really thrill. Each hit of the sticks on the drums is longed for with anticipation until it wonderfully precisely strikes.

CAAS Elysian Audio Server (EAS)

- Preis: um 9.500 Euro
- Vertrieb: Hörgenuss für Audiophile, Frankfurt a.M.
- Telefon: 069 40326292
- Internet: www.hgfa.de
- B x H x T: 350 x 80 x 330 mm
- Eingänge: 1 x Ethernet, 4 x USB-A, 1 x S/PDIF coaxial, 2 x RCA Stereo
- Unterstützte Dateiformate: gängige PCM-Formate
- Unterstützte Abtastraten: bis 192 kHz, 24 Bit (S/PDIF 96 kHz, 16 Bit)
- Ausgänge: 1 x XLR Stereo, 2 x RCA Stereo (davon 1 x Line-out), 1 x HDMI

HiFi

<checksum>

The CAAS Elysian Audio Server more than deserves to be called 'high-end'. Diversely applicable, it combines excellent workmanship with superior sound. This is how modern, outstanding HiFi looks.

The large amount of development work that CAAS has put into its converter section has really paid off. The Elysian Audio Server is really what high-end represents. The case is superbly processed and offers elegance without extravagance; the price is quite high-end and its operation, just like the technology is not commonplace. The EAS is also distinguished by its wonderfully refreshing, realistic music reproduction.

Philipp Schneckenburger



Access to the interior of the EAS is gained only through the underneath. The rest of the housing is milled from a single piece of metal

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Stereophile 2012 „Best Sounding High-End Audio Products“ Award
Stereophile 2012, 2013 „Recommended Components“ Awards

RMAF/Apex Audio, The Absolute Sound 2012 „Best Sound at Show“ Award
CES/Ayon 2013 AV Sound „Best Sound“ Gold Show Award
und viele weitere Auszeichnungen von HiFi-Magazinen aus aller Welt