

REVIEW CABASSE ABYSS – STEREO AMPLIFIER WITH STREAMING

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Review Cabasse Abyss - Stereo amplifier with streaming is a Compact all-in-one with a big sound which can stream Cabasse Control App, AirPlay 2, Chromecast, Spotify Connect, DLNA, and Bluetooth.

A music amplifier that handles TV sound and has plenty of streaming options? There are more nowadays, but the size of a children's shoe box and the beautiful color screen make the brand new Abyss from Cabasse an outsider. But how do they sound?

The Cabasse Abyss is indeed not your average all-in-one amplifier. There are more compact devices that promise to do everything, such as NAD's M10v2 or Naim's Uniti Atom. But Cabasse, for its part, is clearly trying to offer something slightly different here. And yet also keep that price tag just a little more accessible, although the Abyss is a bit higher than compact streaming amplifiers. Compared to what dangles from those high-end rivals, the price is a bit lower. It is very clear for whom it is intended: people who are looking for a discreet yet better amplifier that plays streaming music and can serve as a TV sound solution. A higher quality finish and a little eccentricity in terms of design is also part of it. Hi-fi from France simply has a reputation to uphold. And that certainly applies to

Cabasse, Pearl collection has been presenting wireless speakers for years that can compete with the high-profile Phantoms from Devialet in terms of progressive design.



The Abyss of 1,690 euros aims for modern tastes with its design and functions, that quickly becomes clear. It is traditional in the sense that you have to add two more speakers. These can be speakers from Cabasse itself, and then you benefit from a special function on this speaker. But there's no reason why you couldn't use Bowers & Wilkins, KEF or any other brand of speakers. Despite its small size, the Abyss class D amplification accommodates 2 x 120 Watt amplification (8 Ohm). There are also a number of physical inputs for connecting a CD player or turntable, for example, which makes it more versatile. And of course an HDMI-ARC input, because that can no longer be missing on a design amplifier that wants to appeal to a broad target group.

What	Stereo amplifier with streaming
streaming	Cabasse Control App, AirPlay 2, Chromecast, Spotify Connect, DLNA, Bluetooth
Inputs	HDMI-ARC, optical, 2 x cinch, USB port
Extras	LEAP, DFE, sub output, touch screen

Dimensions	24.5 × 9.7 × 2cm
Weight	3.5 kg



Unobtrusively premium

Just put the Abyss on a shelf somewhere and most visitors will compliment you on the new projector. Of course it isn't, but the design and size make it easy to make that mistake if it's not on. The square shape in matte black and the heavy cooling fins on the side, but especially the round metal-colored ring that runs around a centrally placed display provide the necessary deception. As soon as you play music, it immediately becomes clear what the Abyss really is: a real stereo amplifier. The round screen then shows a clef symbol or the album art of the music you're streaming. You can turn this off if you wish.

There's even more going on with that ring. By putting your finger on it and pushing it, you can turn it. This way you change the volume, which is immediately shown graphically on the screen. A nice function, and it complements the further operation nicely. You select inputs by tapping the screen. While streaming you can also press icons to go to the next track or pause music.

For the rest, the Abyss mainly figures itself out. The matte black finish and the almost invisible on/off button give this device a very sober look. It is closer to the pole 'disappears into the interior' than to 'attracts attention' on the design scale.



Voice control is possible

We were surprised to find no remote control in the box. That might have worked. Now you can turn your music quieter or louder via the ring on the device or via the accompanying app. Because the Abyss understands HDMI-CEC commands, you can simply use the remote control of the TV set while watching TV.

The Cabasse Control app is not just for the Abyss. The same software platform is also used in other products from the French brand, allowing you to operate multiple Cabasse devices at the same time. The platform is multiroom ready; if you have, say, a few Pearl speakers in one room and the Abyss with its own speakers elsewhere in the house, you can play music on both.

You set up the Abyss via the Control app, with an optional trip via the Google Home app. After all, you can link the amplifier to the Google platform and control it with your voice. You will have to tap another device, such as a Nest Mini, with a microphone.

Cabasse has put a lot of thought into how to set up a product like this. One of the problems with an amplifier and loudspeakers is that the sound performance depends on a number of things. Such as: the room in which people listen and where the speakers are placed correctly. You can compensate for this with a room calibration, but that is not on the Abyss. You do go through a clear step-by-step plan during setup (or later via the DEAP option in the app) where you answer a few questions about where your speakers and sofa are. DEAP is also more than answering a few questions, it also includes a correction for your specific speakers. Well, if you own speakers from Cabasse at least. Then the performance of the amplifier will be optimized. Interesting if, for example, you buy a pair of Cabasse Jersey MT32 speakers with subwoofer, because then the Abyss is immediately set correctly. That's handy.



Many ways to stream

You will also find many streaming options in the Control app. However, the amplifier is equally well equipped with Spotify Connect, Chromecast and AirPlay. So you can simply open your favorite music app on your Android device or Apple device and designate the Abyss as a speaker.

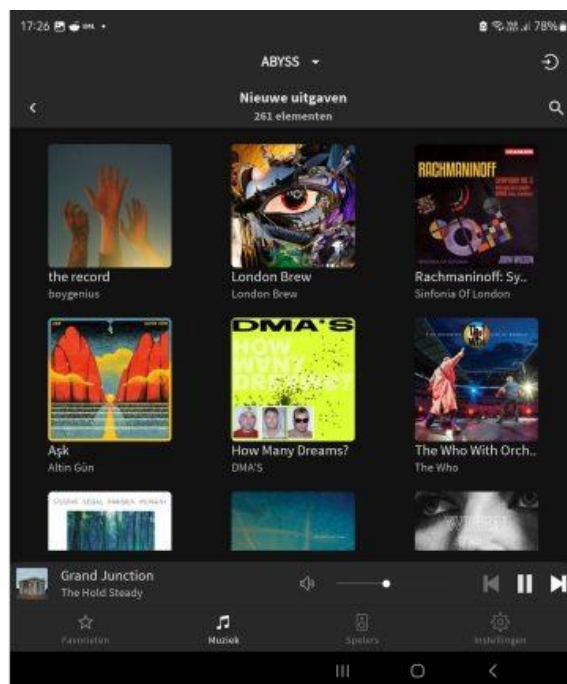
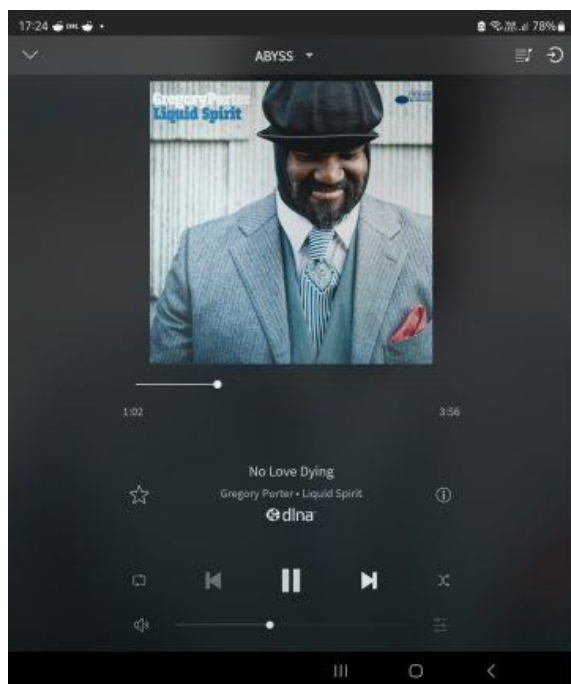
However, the Control app offers a number of interesting options: internet radio, a number of streaming services (Deezer, Qobuz and Tidal) and playing your own music files. How do you get the latter at the Abyss? They can be on your smartphone, or you plug a drive into the back USB port. The app also automatically finds shared drives on the network.

Since the Cabasse Abyss relies on DLNA to play music over the network, you can opt to use another DLNA player app. With BubbleUPnP, for example, the amplifier can be operated perfectly. It's just what you find useful. The Control app does more than just give access to music, as we already mentioned. In addition to controlling the volume, you can use this to select inputs and adjust certain settings.



Lots of tuning possible

The fact that such a small amplifier is able to drive many large loudspeakers is due to the class D technology. We are curious about what is possible, so we close our Canton Reference 7 K floorstander on the Abyss. No challenge in terms of power, because the Cantons are controlled with conviction. While listening to a large number of tracks from our regular test playlist, we notice that the speakers are a bit more present in the low end than when we were previously working with a Purifi output stage. The Abyss seems to add some body, which seems to encourage these reproducers that have a bass peak anyway. That means, for example, that 'Angel' by Massive Attack or 'Sound in a Dark Room' by Telefon Tel Aviv stand like a house with a very solid foundation. Quite impressive if you like a powerful and full presentation. Before you get a certain picture of what the Cabasse does, we previously listened to a pair of Klipsch Premium Reference speakers on this amplifier. There the bass was a bit more balanced; so it really is a case of reinforcing something that is already present in the Cantons. When we experimented a little further, we also noticed that this impression had a lot to do with the Dynamic Fidelity Enhancer or DFE. This is a feature you can turn on or off that adjusts the tonal balance according to the volume. At a lower volume level, it adds a bit more bass, for example, so that quiet music doesn't sound too thin. DFE is not an on or off function, you can adjust it more or less. That is positive, because with one speaker, for example, the zero position will sound too intense, with another just right. For example, we found it a bit too much on those Cantons, but with a few DALI Rubicon 2s it was quite successful and those bookshelf speakers sounded a bit bigger. Speaking of experimenting: a two-band equalizer and an Audio Spectrum option give you even more tuning. These functions intervene very audibly, so it helps to play with them so that the Abyss really sounds the way you like it. Purists may not like all this, but on the other hand, the Cabasse handles the adjustments without introducing extra artificiality.



With all-in-one amplifiers, we always like to check the analog inputs. That may seem minor since there's streaming built in, but it's not too inconceivable that Abyss owners would add a record player to the story. The Cabasse amplifier does not have a real phono-ready input, so in this scenario you must provide a turntable with a built-in phono preamplifier or a separate amplifier. That's what we do, with a Pro-Ject X2 B and a Phono Box S3 B. One of the records we listened to was 'inFLUX' by Anna B Savage, where we enjoyed a very good reproduction delivered from the Pro-Ject turntable. Very full and without a trace of harshness in the voice, we can't say anything bad about it. The orchestral performance of Austin Wintory's 'Journey' – the soundtrack to the PS game of the same name – was played well, open and rich in detail, with strings well placed. Happy to hear – literally! – that this part of the Abyss was not neglected. The Cabasse amplifier also performed well when watching TV. It has enough power and doses its power to also properly reproduce more dynamic soundtracks, such as the action-rich 'The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard'.



Returning to music, we listen to some more music that we stream from our Synology NAS and Minimserver. 'Franconapa', for example, played by Alessandro Quarta (WAV, 48 kHz/32-bit), is excitingly and dynamically brought through the amplifier on the DALIs. It is mainly that dynamic aspect that surprises us, because you don't expect a small thing to have the ability to properly convey the intensity and that deep bass note that comes along

a few times in this track. However, the Cabasse does that without showing any drops of sweat. Its warmer yet detailed character also makes Gregory Porter's 'No Love Dying' sound very captivating. And the word character is really appropriate. If you think of class D as transparent or somewhat soulless, you will discover something completely different here.



Conclusion

The Abyss is a beautiful design amplifier from Cabasse that has many talents. Perhaps its greatest asset is that it plays very mature – and that with a footprint of a child's shoebox. In terms of sound quality it performs well and we appreciate that you do have some options to tweak the tuning. Among other things, to ensure that those small bookshelf speakers also offer a lot of listening pleasure at a lower volume level. The Abyss is above all a very handy music system that offers a lot of music pleasure without making it complex.

Pros

- Simple step-by-step plan for acoustic adjustments
- Good support music formats
- Lots of streaming options
- Powerful, warm and immersive
- Compact
- HDMI ARC

Negatives

- No Ron
- No remote included

