

Review of Audia Flight FLS10 by
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Audia Flight FLS 10 Integrated Amplifier



The Audia Flight FLS 10 is among the most engaging integrated amplifiers to have graced the Barn. Its performance is in some ways remarkable while being wholly engaging in every way. Why not begin at the end for a change?

What made the FLS 10's first impression remarkable, striking, is its way with bass response. The Audia Flight's first partner was my DeVore Fidelity O/96 speakers, speakers I know better than I know most people, and I've never heard them reproduce bass so fully and forcefully. Like people, hifi can surprise with hidden strengths and it just takes the right partner to reveal them. The O/96 loved the FLS 10 for its ability to bring out their best traits, from bottom to top and everything in between.

But these remarkable strengths of the Audia Flight traveled with it to play with equal authority through the review Sonner Audio Legato Duo ([more info](#)) and Perlisten S5t speakers ([more info](#)), a nicely diverse group. While none of these fine speakers necessarily need the FLS 10's 200 Watts of output power (into 8 Ohms, 380/700 Watts into 4/2 Ohms) from its class A transimpedance/current-feedback circuitry, they all enjoyed its effortless control, unrestrained dynamics, and powerful tuneful bass. Each pairing also produced as large and free-from-the-speakers sound image I've experienced in Barn, or anywhere for that matter, with rich timbre and shimmering upper registers that make music ring out as if the chain of reproduction, from recording to playback, was a pure conduit for emotive energy.

What I'm saying is listening to music with the Audia Flight FLS 10 driving all three of these speakers, a pair at a time of course, was a wow-inducing joyride with all of the thrills, chills, and subtle riches music has to offer on very full display. Wow-inducing for weeks on end.



The review unit also came with the optional DAC and Phono modules, making it a full-function integrated for anyone so inclined. It's been my experience, when we get up into the FLS 10's price class, that your typical audiophile will lean toward separates, a stand alone DAC and phono stage, to eek out every bit of ultimate performance from their system. And building a system can and should be fun, with a sense of personal reward, and perhaps even pride, in how things work out, how the entire system sounds and of greater importance how it makes us feel. And I totally get it and you can certainly do better than the Audia Flight DAC and phono modules.



a DeVore O/96 (left) and Perlisten S5t posed for a picture together

That being said, I spent a lot of time listening through the optional Audia Flight built-in DAC using the review Auralic ARIES G1.1 Streamer to feed its AES input, and I was completely satisfied with the sonic results. Costing a hair under \$2k, you'll be hard pressed to get similar results from a price-comparable stand alone DAC so make of that what you will. To my mind, there's something lovely about a simple system and there's no sonic penalty paid if you decide to go all-in-one with Audia Flight.



the Sonner Audio Legato Duo catching some sun

The same goes for the phono stage, which accepts MC and MM cartridges through separate inputs and offers load options from two banks of DIP switches located around back. Not the most convenient place, but if you're a set it and forget it kinda record player, one and done isn't a hardship. Once set and playing records on the lovely Michell Gyro SE with the classic Ortofon 2M Black MM cartridge mounted to the Michell TecnoArm 2, I was off an running with not a sonic care in the world. While my experience with phono stages pales in comparison to my DAC background (I'm working on remedying that), I can comfortably recommend the Audia Flight Phono option and once again think you'd be hard-pressed to get better results for its \$1300 asking price.



I also really enjoyed the FLS 10's silky smooth volume control, especially its 0.5dB increments allowing for very fine tuned adjustment. The included aluminum remote was also a pleasure to use for adjusting volume and I may have started to wear out the Up button (joke). The front panel offers a wave-shaped view into the recessed display, while the front panel buttons offer input selection, mute, phase, SPK that mutes the speakers when using the nearby headphone output (which I did not use), and settings for the optional DAC, also available with the remote, including a choice of PCM and DSD (only via USB) filters and PCM Dithering Mode. The remote also offers access to additional settings including Balance, Gain settings for each input, Activate/Deactivate inputs, and Direct for bypassing the internal preamp. I will share that using the menu system wasn't exactly intuitive but I figured it out. In terms of looks, I think the FLS 10 looks the part of a not inexpensive piece of kit and its near 80lbs make it feel nearly immovable (for my aging back).

Another result of the FLS 10's effortless power is I found myself dialing up the volume to higher than usual levels—a lot. Often. Show Me The Body's "Spit" from their album *Corpus I* features vocals by Princess Nokia, and troubling lyrics, along with growling angry bass, harmonic string pings, and smashing drums with cymbal hits that ricocheted around the Barn like flashes from a golden hued strobe. With listening levels pushing into the 90s (dB), "Spit" filled the Barn with larger than life menace. Even at its most angry, the Audia Flight never came close to losing its cool with this music and actually seemed to get better, and better, the louder and more difficult it became with sounds exploding in air. Stunning.



In terms of comparisons, The Audia Flight FLS 10 does not sound like the lovely Mola Mola Kula ([review](#)), which does not sound like the lovely Riviera Labs Levante ([review](#)). The Kula sounds, comparatively, more resolving than the FLS 10, a bit more able to dig into music's finer recesses while keeping a firm control on the bigger picture. The Audia Flight certainly outweighs the Mola Mola in the bass department and sounds more brawny, more physically engaging. The Kula, in these terms, sounds a bit more ephemeral, heady, giving music a more cerebral appeal. I don't hear one amp bettering the other, rather I hear two convincing yet different presentations. For vinyl lovers, especially mono record collectors, the Mola Mola's impressively long list of EQ curves make it the clear winner here.

It has been a long time since the Riviera Labs Levante graced the Barn with its reproductive magic, but the Riviera separates are still here (**review**), and the Levante shares a house sound that makes music feel more fully physically formed, more dimensionally real, than any amp I've heard. It is, in this regard, stunning. Once again the Audia Flight offers more and better bass response and overall heft, making music feel physically involving, like being tossed and turned by waves of sound. I hesitate to use the word delicate to describe the Levante as that may be read as a negative but its not—it offers an almost uncanny sense of you-are-there-ness even in the quietest moments where the Audia Flight takes a more direct and dynamic approach. Horses for courses.

I wish I had some speakers here that would put the FLS 10's power reserves, especially into low impedance loads, to the test. But I don't, so all I've got is the manufacturer supplied specs and a really big hunch that the Audia Flight is fairly unflappable. Try before you buy.

Another aspect of the Audia Flight's strengths lies in its ability to make music feel energized, as if every sound had its own power supply making music light up the room with pure excitement, as if a giant light posse, yea its called a light posse!, of fireflies were responsible for making the music reappear from the recording unrestrained. Archie Shepp's *Blasé: Live at the Pan-African Festival* from 1969 is a joyous and wild ride, with Shepp transforming his tenor sax into any number of wild creatures commenting on the melody, mood, and vocals as performed, beautifully, by Jeanne Lee. Every skronk and squeal exploded into the Barn while Jeanne Lee's smooth as silk vocals on "Sophisticated Lady" made everything feel alright. The FLS 10 acting as band leader with real brawn, pulling sound from silence to scream with effortless lightning speed. Shocking.

The Audi Flight's way with music, regardless of the speaker in play, generated the kind of excitement within me that turns listening to music into a sonic adventure. "I wonder what this will sound like?" "Oh, and this!" And on and on. I ripped through many a track from my Favorite Test Track list with nothing but joy and excitement spurring me on well into the night. Marc Ribot's "Midost", Antony and the Johnson's heart wrenching cover of "Knockin' On Heaven's Door", Lankum's super solemn "Katie Cruel", Smerz' dreamland "Versace Strings", and many more. Day after day, week after week, my level of excitement in listening never waned. As far as I'm concerned, that's the goal of every hifi.



The Audia Flight FLS 10 is among the most engaging integrated amplifiers to have graced the Barn. It's performance is in some ways remarkable while being wholly engaging in every way. The optional DAC and Phono modules are better than good and offer performance that will be hard to beat at their asking price for anyone interested in a one box solution. While there are other integrated amplifiers out there that offer equally compelling, yet different, performance, the Audia Flight's strengths put it on equal ground. If you're looking for full figured excitement from an integrated amplifier that can bring out the bass from your speakers that may be laying in wait, the Audia Flight FLS 10 is a remarkably good choice.

