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AURALIC ARIES G1 WIRELESS STREAMING TRANSPORTER REVIEW

YONGKI GO, PH.D. [\(https://hometheaterhifi.com/author/yongki-go/\)](https://hometheaterhifi.com/author/yongki-go/) × NOVEMBER 5, 2018 × WIRELESS [\(https://hometheaterhifi.com/reviews/audio-accessory/wireless/\)](https://hometheaterhifi.com/reviews/audio-accessory/wireless/)

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The ARIES G1 is based on the same Tesla G2 platform as the top-of-the-line ARIES G2. Thus, it has the same wireless streaming capability that can handle high-resolution music formats up to DSD512 or PCM 32 bit/384 kHz.



Just like the ARIES G2, the ARIES G1 is also equipped with dual Femto clocks, dual Purer-Power supplies, and a 1 GB memory cache. The similarity of the two products does not end there. The ARIES G1 also has a similar look as the ARIES G2 with its matte dark-gray finish and clean front-panel appearance sporting a high-resolution 4-inch color LCD display. While the ARIES G1 is not equipped with some of the high-end features of the ARIES G2, such as the unity chassis, specially-damped feet, lightning link connection, and the USB galvanic isolation, AURALiC still ensures that the ARIES G1 can deliver performance worthy of the ARIES reputation. In fact, I found that the ARIES G1 is a marvelous addition to the ARIES product family and carries a significant bang for the buck.

Highlights

AURALiC ARIES G1 Wireless Streaming Transporter

- Very good construction quality and attractive finish.
- 4-inch high-resolution true-color front-panel display.
- High-resolution wireless Bluetooth and network streaming capability up to DSD512 and PCM 32 bit/384 kHz.
- Versatile connectivity with AES/coaxial/optical digital outputs and high-speed USB output.
- Smart IR remote control feature.
- Wireless playback control using mobile devices or tablets.
- Lightning DS control app for iOS and Lightning web interface for other platforms.
- Quick streaming file access.
- Great sonic performance.

Introduction

The ARIES G1 reviewed here is a new product addition in AURALiC's revamped ARIES wireless-streaming transporter lineup. The excellent ARIES G2 represents the top-of-the-line offering in this lineup. I reviewed the ARIES G2 not too long ago and I found it to be excellent in every respect and thus it earned my high recommendation. This excellence, which seems to be achieved with a cost-no-object design mentality, understandably comes with a rather hefty price tag of \$3,899. The ARIES G1 is created as the more affordable option in the wireless-streamer product lineup. In order to offer the ARIES G1 at a significantly lower price than the ARIES G2 at \$2,199, corners must be cut somewhere. However, when you consider that AURALiC keeps the core of the two devices the same and maintains the same functionalities, the ARIES G1 has the potential to bring a lot of performance for the price. This leads to the intriguing question of whether the ARIES G1 has what it takes to fulfill such potential. The answer to this very question will be the main focus of my review here.

AURALIC ARIES G1 WIRELESS STREAMING TRANSPORTER SPECIFICATIONS

STREAMING FILE FORMATS:

Lossless: AIFF, ALAC, APE, DIFF, DSF, FLAC, OGG, WAV and WV

Lossy: AAC, MP3, MQA and WMA

SAMPLING RATES:

PCM: 44.1KHz to 384KHz in 32Bit

DSD: DSD64(2.8224MHz), DSD128(5.6448MHz), DSD256(11.2896MHz),

DSD512(22.57892MHz)

CONTROL SOFTWARE:

AURALiC Lightning DS for iOS

AURALiC Lightning DS for web browser (device settings only)

OpenHome compatible control software (BubbleUPnP, Kazoo)

Roon (Roon Core required separately)

STREAMING INPUTS:

Network shared folder, USB Drive, UPnP/DLNA Media Server, native TIDAL and Qobuz

Sublime+ streaming, Internet Radio, AirPlay, Bluetooth, Songcast, RoonReady

AUDIO OUTPUTS:

Digital Outputs: AES/EBU, Coaxial, Toslink

USB Output: USB Host to compatible DAC

NETWORK:

Wired: Gigabit Ethernet

Wireless: 802.11b/g/n/ac Tri-Band WiFi

POWER CONSUMPTION:

Sleep: <10W

Playback: 50W max

DIMENSIONS (W X D X H):

13.4 x 12.6 x 3.2 in. (34cm x 32cm x 8cm)

WEIGHT:

15.9 lbs (7.2kg)

MSRP:

\$2,199

COMPANY:

[Auralic \(/av-directory/auralic/\)](http://Auralic.com/av-directory/auralic/)

SECRETS TAGS:

Auralic, Aries, Aries G2, Transporter, Wireless Streaming Transporter, Wireless Transporter
Review 2018

Design

The appearance of the AURALiC ARIES G1 carries a strong resemblance to its big brother, the ARIES G2. Both are handsomely simple with the same overall geometrical size and dimensions. No product model is indicated on the front or top panels, but one can tell the two products apart relatively easily. As opposed to the ARIES G2 monolithic look, the ARIES G1 sports a two-tone appearance with its silver front-panel buttons on the matte dark-gray panel. Your taste may be different than mine, but I like the two-tone finish of the ARIES G1 as I think it makes the overall look of the product less subdued.

Besides the power on/stand-by button on the left and the four navigation/selection buttons on the right, the front panel of the ARIES G1 sports a 4-inch high-resolution (over 300 ppi) color-LCD display that provides information on the operational status of the unit: playback status, configuration setting, and music library browsing. It also displays the album cover art for the song playing in full color during playback, if the source provides. This display can be dimmed (7 dim levels) or completely turned off if desired. I mostly left this display on as I found it to be appealing and informative. The second lowest display dim-level setting was usually sufficient for me. This display is not of a touch-screen variety, so the navigation and selection of the menu for operating the device must be done from a remote control that has been programmed to work with ARIES G2 or using the four buttons to the right of the display.



Input/output connectors of the ARIES G1 are located on the rear panel. These include receptacles for two Wi-Fi antennas, an Ethernet port, and input for an external USB storage. Unlike the ARIES G2, there is no provision for adding an internal drive in the ARIES G1. The digital outputs provided are in the form of AES/EBU, optical, coaxial, and high-speed asynchronous USB. Unlike in the ARIES G2, no Lightning Link high-speed connector is provided. Although the technical advantage of Lightning Link connector is there, this omission is not too big a deal if you do not have another Lightning Link equipped device to connect to. As a result of the Lightning Link omission, the rear panel of the ARIES G1 looks slightly less crowded than that of the ARIES G2.



For a unit that is designed to be at a much lower price point than the ARIES G2, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that AURALiC generously equipped the ARIES G1 with the Tesla G2 platform, which is the same processing platform as in the ARIES G2. This platform has up to 37,500 MIPS processing speed, 2 GB system memory, and 8 GB data storage, sufficient for handling a vast variety of audio formats at sampling rates up to 32 bit/384 kHz for PCM signals or DSD512 for DSD signals and serving as the unit's software processing engine as well as advanced DSP functionality. Other ARIES G2 features that trickle down to the ARIES G1 include the use of two Purer-Power™ linear power supplies to prevent internal interference (one for powering the ARIES G1's processing

circuit, LCD display, and storage, while the other is dedicated to power sensitive audio components such as the Femto clocks and the USB audio output) and dual Femto clocks to reduce jitter on the output signals (one is for the AES/EBU, coaxial, and toslink outputs, while the other one is dedicated to the USB controller).

Obviously, to meet the price point, corners must be cut somewhere. The ARIES G1 does not have galvanic isolation for shielding against electromagnetic interference as in the ARIES G2. Also the ARIES G1 does not employ a unity chassis design or vibration dampening feet. However, even without these features, the ARIES G1 seems rigidly constructed with overall very good build quality.

The ARIES G1 does not come with a remote control, but it has Smart-IR Remote Control feature to let you map the device's functionality onto any remote of your choice. It is worth noting that AURALiC also does not supply a remote control with the ARIES G2. Even though I can operate the ARIES G1 without a remote control, I still feel that including a simple remote control is a good idea and will bring a plus point in using the unit.



Setup and In Use

The ARIES G1 setup menu shares structural similarity to other AURALiC products so by now I am quite familiar with it. The main setup I had to do before use was to connect it to my home network, which can be accomplished using the front-panel display system (by navigating the menu using the front-panel buttons), using the Lightning DS app on an iOS platform, or using the Lightning web control interface, which can be accessed on any platform. I tried both the Ethernet and Wi-Fi network connections with good success. I found the Ethernet connection was the easiest to set up and yielded the most stable as well as the fastest streaming speed. This is especially noticeable when streaming large-size high-resolution music files. The waiting time for buffering such files before the music started using the Ethernet connection was a second or two shorter than using Wi-Fi connection. For streaming control during my review, I mostly used AURALiC's own Lightning DS app on my iPad. Once in a while, I used BubbleUPnP from my Android phone with no issue. However, the Lightning DS app offers more control functionality of the ARIES G1, hence it was my preferred method to operate the unit.

During the review, I used the AURALiC ALTAIR and the Bel Canto DAC3.7 as the DAC to the ARIES G1. The preamplifier was Classe (CP-500) as well as Bel Canto amplifiers (Ref500S and EVO200.4) driving the NHT Evolution T6 speakers served were the downstream components during my evaluation. If the ARIES G1 is the only source in the system, then a preamplifier is not needed. The volume control in the ARIES G1 is of good quality and I would not hesitate using it. However, for convenient switching to other sources, I just set the ARIES G1 volume to its maximum gain of 100 and controlled the playback volume using the Classe preamplifier.

Both the digital (AES/EBU, coaxial, or optical) and USB outputs from the ARIES G1 were evaluated. As is typically the case, these two outputs cannot be used simultaneously as they use different digital-clock synchronization methods. When a compatible USB DAC is connected to the ARIES G1, the option to select the ARIES G1 digital outputs or the external DAC outputs (through USB connection) will appear in the hardware setting within the Lightning DS app or the Lightning web browser interface. The USB connection is the way to go if you want to playback high-resolution audio signals (higher than 24 bit/192 kHz) in

their native sampling rates. Through the ALTAIR, I got generally better sonic results using the high-speed USB connection. But this does not mean that the USB connection will always give you a better outcome. When I connected the non-USB outputs of the ARIES G1 to the Bel Canto DAC3.7, which costs about two and half times more than the ALTAIR, I got equally satisfying and perhaps even better sonic performance than what I got from the USB connection to the ALTAIR. This shows you that pairing the ARIES G1 with a capable DAC is crucial in getting the best performance out of it.

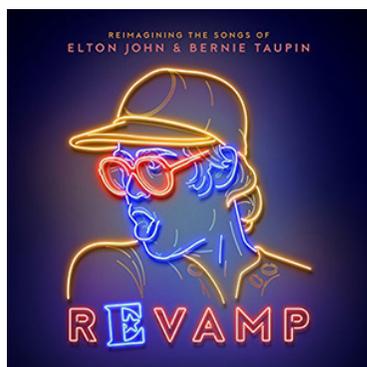
Various music streaming methods were used during the review: Bluetooth, AirPlay, Ethernet, and Wi-Fi. Source music from TIDAL as well as various formats of music files stored in my network storage and external hard drive were used for this review. In general, I did not experience any issue with any of these methods, although to appreciate the capability of the ARIES G1 in streaming high-resolution audio formats, Wi-Fi network or Ethernet connections are recommended. Generally speaking, the ARIES G1 was sonically respectable in playing back lossy music file formats such as mp3 or AAC, and simply awesome in streaming lossless audio formats, such as lossless FLAC or DSD. It is in streaming these lossless audio formats that the ARIES G1 really earns its stripes.

First of all, since the ARIES G1 is based on the same processing platform as the ARIES G2, and I knew firsthand how good the ARIES G2 was, my expectation on the performance of the ARIES G1 was a bit high. But soon after I critically listened to some music through it, I knew that the ARIES G1 just did not have the DNA to disappoint. It effortlessly exceeded my expectation in flying colors. Compared to the ALTAIR, which can also function as a streamer, the ARIES G1 fleshes out the details and the sense of space in the music better with a higher degree of transparency.



Elan Catrin Parry "Angel"

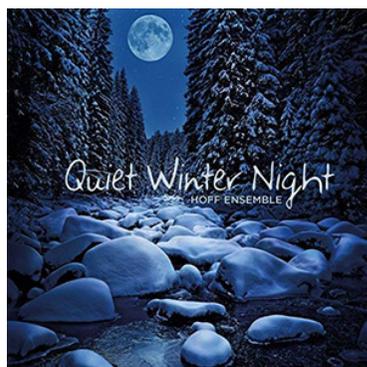
In fact, transparency and presentation of details seem to be the ARIES G1's strong suit. These traits were clearly exhibited in the song *Arwyn: Anfonaf Angel* by Elan Catrin Parry from her album *Angel* (2018). Her vocal purity and sultriness sounded so natural through the ARIES G1. The accompanying instrument ensemble in the song was portrayed in a believable concert-hall stage behind her, generating an intimate yet grand presentation.



The Songs of Elton John and Bernie Taupin "Revamp"

The capability of the ARIES G1 to naturally convey vocals was nothing short of impressive. It conveyed effortlessly the soulfulness of Sam Smith's voice in the song *Daniel* from the album *Revamp: The Songs of Elton John and Bernie Taupin* (2018), fleshing out the full emotions of the song. This particular track also exemplified the imaging capability of the ARIES G1, especially in the presentation of the relative position between the singer and the main electric guitar player in the stage.

Sam Smith's voice came from the center front of the stage, while the electric guitar melody throughout the song was portrayed steadily to the left of the singer slightly to the back. The separation among the sounds from the other instruments in the three-dimensional soundstage presentation was also nicely conveyed.



Hoff Ensemble "Quiet Winter Night"

The ARIES G1 produced nicely balanced sound across the frequency spectrum. That it has a sweet midrange is probably obvious from my comment of the natural vocal presentation above. I am also happy to note that the ARIES G1 produces airy treble extension and articulate yet impactful bass when called for.

The track *Blagutten* by Hoff Ensemble from the album *Quiet Winter Night* (2012) sounded serene yet impactful from the underlying bass in the music. This track also displayed the ARIES G1's ability to convey the sense of space in the music with its wide and deep soundstage presentation.

During the review, I no longer had the ARIES G2 in my system for direct comparison with the ARIES G1. So my comment below relies only on my recollection about how the ARIES G2 performed in my system during its evaluation. Performance-wise, I thought the ARIES G2 had a slight edge sonically as compared to the ARIES G1. I recalled that musically the ARIES G2 was a tad smoother around the edges with a slight more palpable presentation. So, if cost is of no object, my choice between the two would be the ARIES G2. But considering the ARIES G1 carries less than 60% of the ARIES G2's price tag, the choice becomes less obvious. Your mileage may vary, but to me, there is no doubt that the ARIES G1 sits in a sweeter spot in terms of performance-to-cost ratio.

Conclusions

The ARIES G1 may not be the best wireless streaming transporter from AURALiC, but it sure occupies the sweet spot of the performance-to-cost ratio in AURALiC's wireless streamer product lineup. It is a nicely built product that packs features and performance among the best in its class.

LIKES

- Very good built quality and handsome looking
- High-resolution front-panel display
- Fast streaming playback access
- Versatile Lightning DS control app
- Provision of Lightning web interface for changing device configuration
- Smart IR remote control feature
- Great sounding high bang-for-the-buck product

WOULD LIKE TO SEE

- A simple remote control to be supplied with the product

The ARIES G1 wireless streaming transporter is a product created based on some of the best engineering know-how that AURALiC has invested in the top-of-the-line ARIES G2. The effort seems to pay off nicely, resulting in a high-fidelity wireless music streamer that is well built, feature laden, and very competent sonically at a significantly lower price. Its streaming operation is smooth and fast, and more importantly it has wonderful sonic performance. Clearly, these two new ARIES (G1 and G2) form AURALiC's potent one-two punch to meet the market demands of audio enthusiasts with different priorities. With sonic performance that is not far off from what the top-of-the-line product offers, the ARIES G1 is easy to recommend. In fact, it gets my vote for the higher performance-to-cost ratio wireless streaming transporter between the two.

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Captain James T. Kirk • 2 days ago
 Don, well it seems like that is all your paying for is a sold piece of Aluminum, as their isn't much else in side the unit!

Don Disbennett • 2 days ago
 Yongki: I recently previewed both the G1 and G2 at the Auralic room at RMAF. I agree that the G1 is the more handsome of the two units. Their engineer told me that a big part of the difference in the cost is due to the machining necessary for making the case of the G2 from a solid block of aluminum. To me, the G1 seems almost as solid for a lot less money. As soon as I returned from RMAF, I ordered a G1 and have enjoyed my experience listening to it with several DACs. At first it would not play DSD files with my McIntosh C47 DAC/preamp, but a trip to the shop to install a new digital board and new firmware fixed that issue and now allows streaming DSD via DoP, but not natively. Using the DAC section of my Oppo UDP-205 worked without issue using USB for native DSD streaming and produces a significantly stronger output than the McIntosh. On the other hand, the USB input of an older Mytek Stereo 192 - DSD DAC would not work at all as the Aries app could not "see" the Mytek at all. You didn't mention Auralic's own version of MQA decoding which is not an approved or licensed version, but I found it works just great and some may even prefer it to an official MQA decoding software. The coaxial output of the Aries G1 sounds very good with all three DAC's I tried it with and I actually prefer it for use with the McIntosh over the USB, excepting that the max. resolution is limited to 24/192. Finally, I checked and Auralic offers a basic remote control for both the G1 and G2 for only \$5.00, so I may pick up one, but it also works well with my universal Harmony remote.

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Yongki considers himself as an aerospace engineer by day and an audio/home-theater enthusiast by night. Yongki earned his Sc.D a number of years ago and was a member of the Secrets Team, before returning to Singapore for a number of years. He has now returned to the US and is a professor in aerospace engineering; he has published more than 60 technical articles in various aerospace-related journals and conferences. Although known to be an expert in the field of unmanned aerial systems, audio is always his passion. He was involved in reviewing equipment for SECRETS in the early year, and his continued passion for audio has brought him once again to the SECRETS team. Welcome back Yongki!

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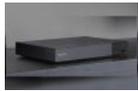
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SECRETS of Home Theater and High Fidelity was launched in 1994 as the first major publication offering serious audio/video journalism on the Internet.

Our magazine, which began with the publication of the SECRETS Primer, is available exclusively on-line and offers to our readers an extensive information resource about home theater and high-end audio.

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