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*Luxman*  
INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER L-595A *Special Edition*



**Cover Story:  
A Very Special  
Edition...**

**Luxman  
L-595ASE**

\$11,995

[luxmanamerica.com](http://luxmanamerica.com)



The first thing you might notice when gazing at Luxman's latest integrated amplifier is the absence of power output meters. Their Class-a amplifiers have yellow meters, the Class-AB amplifiers blue meters, and their highest power L-509x has white. But there are none on the new L-595ASE. You'll also notice a missing rotary input switch. In place of the meters and switch are a series of pushbuttons to call out individual inputs and functions. This is very cool.

What you might not know is that this amplifier is part of Luxman's celebrating 95 years of business. Let that sink in for a minute. None of us were even alive 95 years ago. If you're wondering about spending twelve thousand dollars on an amplifier, hoping someone will be around to fix it twenty years from now, I'm gonna stick my neck out and bet on Luxman being here.

If you've seen the movie *This is Spinal Tap*, you may recall the scene where when Rob Reiner interviews the band's lead guitarist Nigel in his room full of guitars. They stumble on a very rare guitar that "still has the tagger on it," and when our host wants to hold it, Nigel says, "no you can't touch it, you can't even look at it." Some things are that incredible – that beautiful to behold. The Special Edition L-595ASE is one of those objects. I wouldn't let anyone that viewed it look at it for more than a few fleeting seconds. I didn't want anyone's fingerprints or eyeball prints on it while it was here, and I unpacked it with gloves.

Should you be a new reader, or tuning into TONE merely to read this review, I must confess my incredible affection for Luxman products. Of course, they sound excellent, there are other brands that sound great. But there is an ethos of excellence and respect surrounding everything Luxman makes that barely exists anymore. Every time I turn the L-595ASE on, I just want to turn the lights down and bow my head in front of it before playing music. This amplifier is the epitome of understatement. Yet, when you get up close, noticing how exquisitely the casework is machined, right down to the lighted dials and buttons, the depth of thought and execution is boundless. The Luxman L-595ASE is worth every penny of its \$11,995 MSRP.



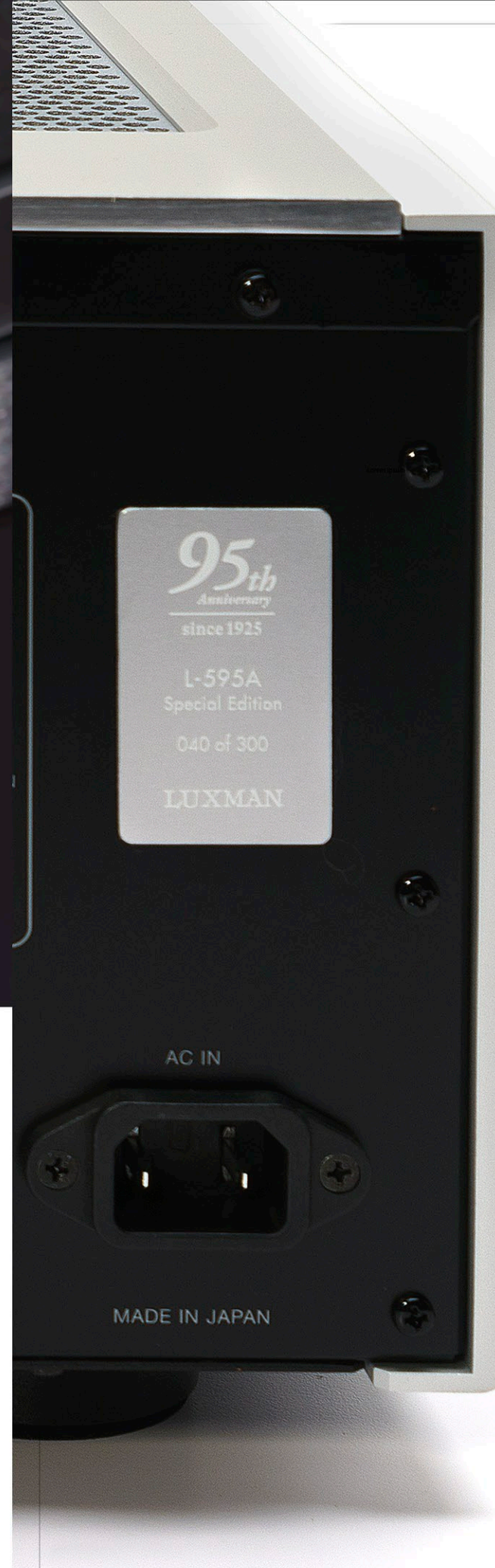




If you consider yourself a hard-core qualityphile, you can spend hours just reveling in the visual detail this amplifier offers. If this were a vintage car, it would be one of those cars that people would say in hushed tones, “it looks fast just standing still.”

### Backstory

We’re still an audio magazine to the core, and form without function isn’t enough. This 30-Watt per channel class-A solid-state amplifier sounds glorious. Contributors Rob Johnson and Bob Gendron have both purchased the Luxman L-590axII on my suggestion, as have a number of friends. Legacy Luxman fans will notice the minute they unbox the L-595A, the homage to the vintage Japanese 540 and 570 integrations – both class-A power, and utilizing similar front panel architecture. Unfortunately, these amplifiers were not built for the US market and require 100 volts (instead of North American 120-volt power), so getting them to work here will be tough.



For those thinking this is merely an L-590axII with a few tweeks and no meters, the difference is much greater. Luxman says using the pushbuttons instead of a rotary dial result in a quieter circuit – which you will also notice the minute you turn the L-595ASE on. It is even quieter than what you are used to with Luxman amplifiers. And the individual switches are unique to this model.

Everything we love about the L-590axII is here with the L-595ASE. Without being able to talk anyone out of their L-590axII, we couldn’t really do a side by side. Pouring over listening notes on both the new and old versions of the 590, everything we find lovely about that amplifier is here in abundance. Aural memory can only go so far.

### Embracing quiet

John Pravel and Jeff Sigmund answered a lot of my questions about this special, limited-edition amplifier. The differences go a lot deeper than just an alternate switching topology. Though the volume control retains the silky, yet positive smoothness of the other Luxman gear we’ve used, the L-595ASE introduces “ODNF-u” to the Luxman amplifier line-up. This is the latest, most advanced iteration of “Only Distortion Negative Feedback”, with improved error detection and higher initial slew-rate. (than even the preceding ODNF 4.0) The new volume control section utilizes the LECUA 1000, 88-step electronically controlled attenuator, which minimizes sound quality deterioration at low levels.

Copper-clad steel shielding protects the internal signal path from external noise. Special “copper alloy” RCA terminals are featured for the Line-1 input. Expensive “peel-coat” PCB is employed for the joint input/output circuit board, along with Luxman’s “bee-line” smooth rounded circuit trace patterns.

The power supply has also been upgraded, including a new power transformer dedicated to the L-595ASE. Special internal windings construction, wire insulation and potting/damping is applied to achieve very low noise. (No other Luxman model utilizes this exact, same power transformer) Large A+ B loudspeaker relays with very low internal resistance help achieve a lower internal output impedance and a resulting higher damping factor at the speaker terminals. Special internal construction Nippon Chemi-Con power supply smoothing capacitors are employed. And these are also designed to minimize vibration and be isolated from chassis vibration too.



## Top Notch Phono

The L-595ASE has an excellent MM/MC phono stage built in, however, there is no adjustable gain or loading. The MC section is optimized for .3-.5mv cartridges with a 100-ohm load, as it is in all other Luxman integrated amplifiers.

There are plenty of great MC carts that can be used with 100-ohm loading, and we made it a point of putting a recently rebuilt Denon 103dr (from our friends at Ana Mighty Sound) through the paces here. Like every other aspect of the 595, quiet and dynamic are the key words.

Just like every other Luxman integrated we've reviewed, the strongest suit of these amplifiers is their perfect balance – every section delivers an equally high level of performance, yet no particular section outshines the other. This harmony of design delivers maximum performance no matter what source material you are listening to. Kept within the context of like performing speakers and potential analog sources, I can't imagine needing an outboard phono stage for this amplifier, though my only complaint is that I wish Luxman would have offered an additional phono input on the flagship. Even if it would have been separate MM and MC phono inputs.

## That button

When you think of integrated amplifiers with a loudness contour button, no doubt visions of cheesy 70's receivers and mass market speakers fill your head.

For the weeks the L-595ASE was here I stared at that button. Dabbling with the tone controls a bit – Luxman does a fantastic job at offering tone controls that do no harm and subtly adjust the tonal balance to suit your room and speakers.

But a loudness button? No way. Yes way, especially at very low volume, as it was intended to be used.

The slight bit of bass and treble boost offered by the L-595ASE's loudness button is welcome when listening at ultra quiet levels. It brings some needed extra warmth to things and is very unobtrusive in its operation. If you purchase a L-595ASE of your own, don't hesitate to give it a try!

## More listening

We can talk about the engineering and aesthetic aspects of Luxman's L-595ASE all day long, but the real thrill is in the listening. As a confessed tube lover, there are precious few solid-state components that offer up music in such an effortless, natural, and relaxed way that they vanish from your thought process. All the other ones I know cost more than the L-595ASE. A lot more. Even at the price jump from the L-590aXII, the L-595ASE is a major bargain, because it's all on one chassis. As with any other great integrated, just what you'll save not buying three power cords and two extra pairs of premium interconnects makes the L-595ASE a major value proposition.

There's no better reason to ignore specs than the Luxman L-595ASE. You might look at the Luxman and see 30 Watts per channel, with the thought this amplifier is incredibly overpriced. Yet, when you install it in your system, it's overbuilt power supply and output stage deliver more than enough dynamic range to drive nearly any speakers. Certainly nothing we have here is a problem, even the 86db/1-Watt Harbeth C7s or Magnepans. Yes, this 30 WPC amplifier will even drive Magnepans. The L-590aXII is one of the most superb Class-A amplifiers we've ever heard, and the L-595ASE steps the game up even further.





**T**racking through any of our favorite multilayered vocal pieces, the level of fine detail will have you thinking there are some tubes under that incredible casework – but there isn’t. Bass control is incredible. Every speaker from the Sonus faber Stradiveris to the new Fink Team Kim’s we’ve recently acquired is fast, tight, and detailed. The midrange to top end of the frequency response is equally well represented.

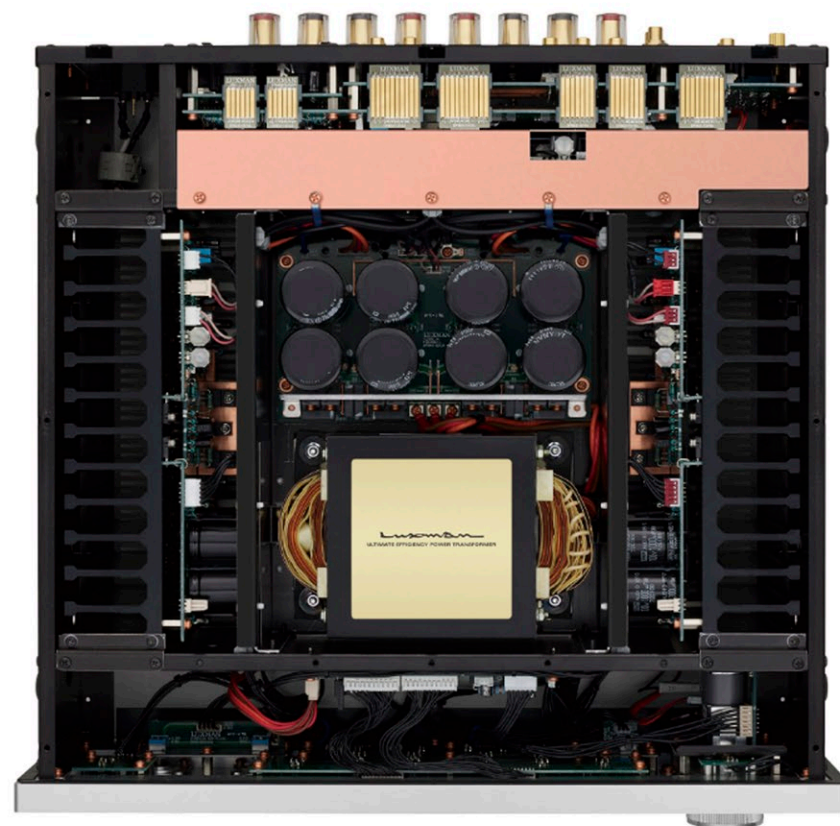
When listening to solo piano or violins, there isn’t even a touch of harshness or grain – putting this amplifier into that ultra-rare category, where you are neither paying attention to the amplifier, nor wondering about the technical side of it. It merely produces glorious, dynamic, music.

On all but the most demanding music played at extremely high level, the L-595ASE truly eliminates the need for separate components, and the argument

of whether an integrated amplifier can provide state of the art sound. It is that refined.

It didn’t take long to get used to no meters on the front panel of the Luxman L-595ASE, or functionality that is different from all the other Luxman pieces I’ve used and owned. It is going to take a long time to get used to it being gone. With only 100 of them coming to the United States out of 300 world-total, actually getting your hands on one will be a bigger challenge. If your dealer has one, and you have the cash, buy it immediately. You won’t get another chance, and I doubt you will see these popping up on the secondary market any time soon.

And if you are one of the 300 lucky people that manage to procure one, know I am very envious of you. In our issue 109, we award three products our Heritage Award, celebrating excellence on every level and longevity. I can tell you where one of these three awards is going right now.



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