

AUDIO
FILE

Pre & power amplifier. Rated at 150W/8ohm
 Made by: Luxman Corp., Japan
 Supplied by: IAG (International Audio Group), UK
 Telephone: 01480 447700
 Web: www.iaguk.com; www.luxman.com
 Price: £9995 (each)



Luxman C-900u/M-900u

Luxman's C-900u preamp and M-900u power amp (£9995 each) are part of the wave of retro-flavoured hardware that has captivated the big Japanese houses, many of whose 'period-look' units eschew digitalia.

'The weight, the power, the flow, all conspired to make our feet tap'

As Luxman offers separate DACs and phono stages, they're not fitted here, eg, the C-900u offers only line inputs and full-function remote control, with tone and balance controls set via large rotaries, but it has no tape monitor facility. The supplied remote allows zooming of the informative fascia display.

At the rear of the preamp can be found a choice of balanced or

single-ended inputs and outputs, earthing posts should you wish to add an external phono stage for a vinyl source, and a couple of Ethernet remote comms ports.

With its resolutely analogue fascia meters, the matching M-900u power amplifier offers both single-ended and balanced (XLR) inputs, remote power on/off, massive multi-way binding posts – some of the best we've seen – and switching for mono bridging and polarity inversion.

INSTANT SWEETNESS
 Our first encounter was with 'Rock The Boat' by The Hues Corporation [Camden (CD)], with the amps hooked up to Wilson Alexias. While the track isn't overripe down below, it is a dance track with a cool, loping bass, gorgeous harmonies, whucka-whucka guitar, and punchy

ABOVE: Two huge rotaries flank the display, governing input and volume as well as navigating through the set-up menu

brass and strings soaring above it all. The Luxman package sounded almost as tube-y as the company's MQ-300 stereo amp [HFN Nov '15], but with 25 times the wattage and a far more clearly delineated bass.

Detroit Emeralds' 'Feel The Need' [Atlantic] is more of the same, but with richer, more Motown-y vocals and stronger drum activity. Moving to vinyl, the strings grew even sweeter, but saccharine never intruded because the '900s possess such balance, with true equanimity from top to bottom.

After a double-dose of disco, we were drawn to mixed percussion, and Santana's 'Oye Como Va' from *Abraxas* [Mobile Fidelity] did the trick, with the track's congas, woodblocks, guiro scraper and other paraphernalia. Here the weight, the power, the flow, all conspired to make our feet tap – critical listening be damned! And that's pretty much as high a compliment as one can pay.

Then in place of the Wilson Alexia speakers we hooked up Spendor LS3/5As, and loaded up 'Rock The Boat' once more. The little gems 'disappeared' and we were reminded of why we'd worshipped them for so long... the soundstage bordered on the epic.

What clinched it for us, though, was neither the punch nor the percussive majesty of the above tracks, but the subtlety of *At Last* from Lou Rawls in tandem with Dianne Reeves [Blue Note].

VERDICT

These units worked faultlessly, the remote was a joy to handle, the sound blissfully natural, while the units are made with the sort of finish that's as cool as Swiss air. ⚡

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	212W / 380W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	230W / 450W / 825W / 1.09kW
Output imp. (20Hz–20kHz, pre/power)	85ohm / 0.012–0.040ohm
Freq. resp. (20Hz–100kHz, pre/power)	+0.0 to –2.3dB / +0.0 to –3.7dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBV/0dBW)	258mV (pre) / 103mV (power)
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBV/0dBW)	98.8dB (pre) / 84.6dB (power)
Distortion (20Hz–20kHz, 1V/10W)	0.0005–0.0008%/0.0007–0.003%
Power consump. (pre/idle/rated o/p)	31W / 190W/555W
Dimensions (WHD in cm) / Weight	44x13x43/44x22x49 / 20/48kg