



# Technics ST-G30 Music Server & Technics SU-G30 Network Amplifier

I have vivid recollections of lusting over Technics hi-fi gear in the late 1970s, when owning a Technics amp, cassette deck or the now legendary SL-1200 direct drive turntable meant you'd arrived on the hi-fi scene.

The components were chunky and handsome in a functional way: the fascias were populated with arrays of buttons, toggles, switches and controllers, and depending on the model, there were VU meters, too. In short, the stuff that hi-fi dreams were made of.

Somewhere along the line, the Technics brand faded into oblivion, even though I'm sure that a good few of those original amps are still around, more than four decades later. They were built to last ...

And you can be sure that there are still many original SL-1200s spinning vinyl in studios and clubs around the world, too.

The good news is that Technics is back. The brand has been resurrected by parent company Panasonic as a high-end marque, expressing everything that is cutting edge in hi-fi technology terms, while also embracing the latest trends – streaming being a prime example.

Looking at the sleek, almost minimalist styling of the ST-G30 music server and the SU-G30 network audio amplifier, it's clear that the audio world has changed a lot. The new Technics look is elegant and lustrous, with a designer appeal that isn't at all intimidating, and is likely to have a high Wife Acceptance Factor.

Something else that's changed is the

nature of the components themselves. All those years ago, even computers were in their infancy, so a music server would have been a completely alien concept.

But here we have the ST-G30, a music server that is able to rip CDs, store the resulting high-resolution audio files on disc, and make them available on a network. Light years removed from the good old cassette deck ...

It's partnered by an equally revolutionary component, at least by 1970s standards. The SU-G30 is what Technics calls a network audio amplifier, which means it combines the role of a stereo amplifier with the ability to access and play files stored on a network, either wired or wirelessly.

Not only that, but it also includes a



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digital-to-analogue converter to read and convert a variety of digital music formats from digital sources, including computers and flash drives. And it also offers a Bluetooth interface,

But the SU-G30 hasn't lost sight of its roots, either: it includes a phono input, so you could still plug in that SL-1200 if you're lucky enough to own one. Or you could buy the all-new, resurrected SL-1200G that's been created as part of Technics' return to premium audio fold.

The ST-G30 vaguely resembles a CD player, complete with centrally mounted disc tray, but the giveaway is the absence of a display. Its smart, all-metal enclosure exudes class and quality.

Apart from the transport tray, the plain fascia offers nothing more than a power button, three blue LEDs and a disc eject button. The transport is used purely to rip CDs to the built-in hard drive, and can't be used to play discs.

The rear panel confirms the dedicated nature of this device. There are no conventional audio inputs or outputs. Instead, there's an Ethernet connector for linking the ST-G30 to a network, as well as two powered USB Type A sockets.

The first can be linked to a USB DAC, or USB DAC/headphone amp, which can then access music stored on the server's hard drive. The second allows backup to an external USB hard drive, or importing from a hard drive onto the ST-G30's internal hard drive.

That hard drive, by the way, is a fast, 2,5-inch 512 GB SSD device that can be easily exchanged for a bigger one by accessing the rear-mounted SATA tray.

The ST-G30 rips bit-perfect copies of music files in the WAV format, or as FLAC files in nine selectable levels of compression. Control and settings are accessed using the free Technics Music app, available for Android and iOS.

It'll work on a mobile phone, but is best loaded and used on the larger screen of a tablet. The app is easy to use, and provides full access to the ST-G30's feature set and set-up.

The ST-G30's music library interface has a comprehensive, versatile folder structure that allows searches via album, artist, folder, recently played, recently added, and even by codec. Ripping is fully automated, and progress can be monitored via the app.

The metadata of the ripped music, provided by Gracenote, can be edited on the app. Ripping speed depends on quality

## VITAL STATS

### Technics SU-G30

Power output .....	2x 50 watts (8 ohms, 1 kHz, 0,5% THD)
Frequency response .....	5 Hz - 80 kHz (line input, -3 dB, 8 ohms)
Analogue inputs .....	1x MM phono, 1x stereo line in
Digital inputs .....	2x digital coaxial RCA, 1x Toslink optical,
.....	1x USB Type A, 1x USB Type B
Outputs .....	1x pair speaker binding posts, headphone jack
Connectivity .....	802.11 Wi-Fi, Ethernet, Bluetooth
Dimensions (WxHxD) .....	430 x 98 x 424 mm
Weight .....	11,5 kg

### Technics ST-G30

Transport .....	Class 1 laser, 783 nm
Discs supported .....	CD, CR-R/W
Storage .....	2,5-inch SATA disc bay, 512 GB SSD
Connectivity .....	Ethernet, USB 3.0 Type A (data backup/import)
Outputs .....	USB 2.0 Type A, USB Audio Class 2.0-compliant
Dimensions (WxHxD) .....	430 x 98 x 391 mm
Weight .....	11,0 kg

### Price

Technics ST-G30 .....	R69 999
Technics SU-G30 .....	R49 999

### Verdict

Classy, beautifully presented network playback system. Versatile and intuitive to use. Lucid, absorbing sonic performance, despite modest output.

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OUR RATING: 83 / 100





but equates to about 3 min of music per minute of ripping time at the highest resolution, excluding metadata look-up time.

The SU-G30 network audio amplifier features the same, sleek styling, all-metal construction and minimalist execution, with the emphasis again on ease of use.

That said, the fascia is a lot busier, combining a clear display on the right with a large central rotary volume controller. Located on the left are a USB Type A socket and a headphone jack, as well as the remote control sensor and a touch-sensitive power button. Source selection is via a smaller rotary controller on the far right.

The rear panel provides a varied but limited array of analogue and digital inputs. As already mentioned, the surprise inclusion here is the MM phono input, probably with the SL-1200G turntable in mind.

You also get a single stereo line-level RCA set, as well as two coaxial RCA and one Toslink optical digital inputs, while the

asynchronous USB Type B allows the link-up of a PC or Mac running music playback software.

Internet radio is also offered using VTune, as is Bluetooth/AirPlay, the former via the high-quality aptX codec – so yes, the SU-G30 is certainly versatile, but traditionalists will probably lament the absence of at least a second, and perhaps a third, stereo analogue input set.

The amp comes with a remote control handset that's full-featured – but frankly, you'd rather use the app, which provides a more logical, intuitive and comprehensive interface for both components combined.

In functional terms, the SU-G30 is quick and responsive, suggesting some significant on-board processing power. It recognised our media server instantly, as well as the ST-G30, and handled the Synology's extensive library of more than 1 000 albums with snappy ease. As a result, the browsing experience was

equally quick and intuitive.

As always, however, the real proof is in the listening – and the Technics duo certainly didn't disappoint.

On Leonard Cohen's 'Almost Like The Blues', from his *Popular Problems* set, the SU-G30 captured the brooding bass, the light-handed pitter-patter of the tom-tom, the melancholy piano and the shuffle of the shaker with vivid realism.

Cohen's vocals regally dominated the musical proceedings, his gravelly contra-bass always powerful enough to become almost tactile in its intensity. Even so, the Technics never lost sight of the shimmering strings and the background vocals, adding an authentic sense of sonic dimension.

The track is full of subtle musical surprises, such as the way the keyboards almost stealthily creep in about 2 minutes into the track. The Technics wasn't caught out, though, introducing this element with subtlety and grace.



## Software

Leonard Cohen — *Popular Problems* (96/24 FLAC)  
 Gregory Porter *Liquid Spirit* (96/24 FLAC)  
 Daft Punk — *Random Access Memories* (88,2/24 FLAC)  
 Opus 3 DSD Showcase Compilation (DSD)  
 Various — *Crossroads Guitar Festival 2013* (44,1/16 WAV)

## Associated Equipment

KEF R500 floorstanding speakers  
 KEF LS50 monitors  
 Oppo BDP-95EU universal deck  
 Primare PRE32/MM30 pre-amp  
 Parasound Halo A21 stereo power amp  
 Synology DS-216se



The overall sound was open and inviting, encouraging the listener to discover, to unwrap the music, and to also experience it emotively. The tonal character was neutral but honest in a beguiling kind of way.

The Technics system not only paid close attention to every facet of the performance, but also depicted the air and dimension of the production with a realism that brought a real immediacy and authenticity to the listening experience.

Gregory Porter's lyrical, liquid baritone on *Liquid Spirit* was captured with power

and precision, bringing him right into the centre of the listening room. On the opening 'No Love Dying', his circumspect, carefully crafted yet flowing intonation is very much in the sonic spotlight, but the Technics still left loads of space and scope for the other musicians.

Notably, the sax solo was vividly, potently rendered, and with such close attention to detail that the artist's breathing was clearly audible. Much more subtle is the softly rendered piano that always remains in the background, but could

still be clearly heard, while the bass and percussion provided vital foundation.

The title track brings the upright bass right to the forefront, and introduces a sassy brass section. But it's Porter's dialogue with the bass that is the highlight of this foot-tapping track. The Technics retained its composure throughout, and again afforded both the bold swathes of sound and fine trickles of detail the same care and honesty.

The listener was presented with a full harvest of smooth, luscious music. It wasn't a warm sound, but certainly a full, tonally broad and powerful one. The amp remained light-footed and agile, faithfully translating the pace and the timing of the music.

Knoa's 'Unca's Flight', a DSD128 track off the *Opus 3 DSD Showcase* compilation saw the Technics pay close attention to fine detail, allowing the densely populated arrangement, with its guitars and fiddles, to open up, and precisely presenting each of the instruments individually, while also portraying the cohesion and rapport between the players.

The physical presence of each instrument was vividly, believably presented across and into a large, deep soundstage. The KEFs were allowed to disappear, leaving only the riveting music behind.

I ended up enjoying my time in the company of these two Technics Grand Class G30 components. They sound fresh, honest and involving, with a penchant for pace and musicality that makes for hugely entertaining listening.

Equally important is how simple the ST-G30 makes it to rip CDs and how easy it is to access high-definition audio on networks via the SU-G30. The added benefit of Bluetooth means smart devices with music content are equally easily accommodated.

Add in the flexibility of the SU-G30's Wi-Fi, USB and digital inputs, together with a very competent MM phono stage, and you have an exciting network playback solution that is as versatile as it's musically captivating.

Deon Schoeman

**\* The Technics G30 range will be available in SA from early 2017.**