



# Merging Technologies MERGING+ANUBIS Music Mission

*This little black box embarks on its second killer mission*

REVIEW BY PAUL VNUK JR.

Last year in our June 2020 issue we took our first look at the Anubis audio interface from Switzerland's Merging Technologies. Anubis is a device that "takes the modular, future-proof paradigm to the next level through a combination of network versatility and open-ended use cases via firmware updates," that Merging calls "Modular by Software." When launched last year, Anubis was on its inaugural Monitor mission. Today we look at the highly anticipated Music Mission.

## Looks and style

Anubis is an elegant, 2 lb. monolithic device made of a single piece of machined aluminum; the body is also the heat sink. It measures 7.9" wide by 5" deep with a slanted top from 1" up to 1.5". On its top is a large, silky-smooth endless rotary encoder and seven soft, RGB-backlit function buttons (multi-function, speaker/headphone selection, mute, and talkback). Right of center is a 2.4" x 4" capacitive TFT LCD multi-touch screen. Anubis is powered by an external power supply included along with an RJ45 cable, a quick start guide, and a protective hard nylon clamshell carry case.

## Network

Anubis is a networked audio device that connects to your system over Cat5 / Cat6 cable (as opposed to USB or Thunderbolt). Anubis can connect singularly to the RJ45 port on your computer, or to a

network hub for maximum flexibility. Note that Anubis can be powered by a Power Over Ethernet (POE) device; see website for details and hub recommendations.

Anubis uses the RAVENNA/AES67 protocol and is fluent in Windows (MAD / ASIO), Mac (VAD / Core Audio), or Linux (ALSA), and it can also function as a standalone device. Network connections and routing assignments are handled using ANEMAN (see the previous review) [recordingmag.com/merging+anubis](http://recordingmag.com/merging+anubis) or the just-released UNITE software (built into the driver).

## Connections

Anubis is a 4X8 audio interface with highly flexible and configurable I/O. Anubis is also expandable to 256 inputs and 256 outputs through an AES67/RAVENNA network connection.

On its front are two high-quality headphone outputs flanking a pair of 1/4"



TRS inputs (line or instrument levels). On its backside are a pair of Neutrik combo jacks (mic and line), a pair of balanced XLR speaker outs, and a pair of TRS line outputs. Another couple of TRS sockets labeled GPIO and MIDI can be configured for foot pedal assignments or to carry MIDI over 1/4" with an appropriate adapter. Also on the back: a locking power connector for use with the included external power supply, a power button, a Kensington lock and one or two RJ45 connectors; the original Anubis came with a single RJ45 connection in a choice Pro or Premium versions. A new 'SPS' model of each adds a second RJ45

# Merging Technologies

## MERGING+ANUBIS

### Music Mission

connector, allowing for multiple Merging units to be used together without needing a network hub.

#### Choices

Pro versions support PCM audio with sample rates up to 192 kHz. The Premium model supports 384 kHz sample rates, native DSD (up to DSD256) and DXD (352.8 kHz) capability. Note that this is not only DSD playback, but also recording, and it pairs nicely with Merging Technologies Pyramix software for the task. This includes Pyramix Elements, an affordable way to dip your toes into this world.

#### +Music Mission

Anubis was previously a well-heeled, versatile monitor controller, speaker switcher, and audiophile AD/DA unit. In Music Mission mode, Anubis now makes the leap to a full-on tracking device and more, with some extra tricks up its sleeve including a full-fledged onboard digital mixer.

#### Sound

Quoting my previous review, "Where Anubis shines is in its ultra-detailed sound." With its high-end D/A conversion and impeccable and powerful headphone outputs for monitoring, with the Music Mission we get to appreciate an audiophile-grade signal path in a recording device, in addition to everything else it does.

#### United

One of the most significant developments of the Music Mission is the release of UNITE. If you have ever struggled with the deep, hieroglyphic ANEMAN matrix, UNITE is a breath of fresh air. UNITE links and routes your Anubis Music Mission with your computer. Importantly, it will instantly link any network-equipped Merging device such as the Horus, Hapi or multiple Anubis units (latest firmware required). You can also use the ins and outs of any AES67-equipped device, although not as seamlessly.

As further network-capable Merging devices are added (or UNITED), the mixer scales its channel count to accommodate, offering bi-directional remote control of all channels (including preamps), monitoring,

and monitor mix setups. Note that latency is only as fast as the slowest unit in a networked setup and slightly lower than many Thunderbolt devices. Having said that, as a drummer, I noticed zero issues with Anubis.

#### Music Mission Mixer

The mixer inside the Anubis Music Mission, as mentioned, is a full-scale mixer that includes a full-featured DSP-based channel strip, three mono or stereo physical aux sends and returns, five cues mixes, onboard reverb and even stereo parallel bus compression and master bus EQ. Each channel also offers solo, pan, mute, and each one can be colored and custom labeled. Additionally, adjacent channels can be linked in stereo, and channels can also be grouped, collapsed and controlled with a single fader. Essentially, it's similar to working with VCA channels on a console.

Music Mission can be controlled on the TFT screen, or you can handle it all on your computer VIA a browser app (smartphone and tablet control forthcoming).

#### The Strip

The channel strip starts with a super-clean and transparent microphone preamp with up to +66dB of gain along with +48v phantom power, 80 Hz high-pass filter, -12dB pad and +12dB boost, which gives the preamp an impressive 78dB of total gain. Even the talkback mic gets its own full-featured channel with all of the above. Next is a configurable four-band EQ (peak, cut or shelving) followed by a full dynamics section with a separate compressor, limiter and gate per channel.

As you might expect, the EQ and dynamics are not colorful or vibey, but I found them equal to most DAWs and smoother and more transparent than most live digital mixers I use regularly. They provide surprisingly good dynamics and filters—great for shaping sounds on the way in.

#### Reverb

The reverb is best described as utilitarian and functional, with a metallic sound. This reverb is fine for giving a singer a sense of space or adding ambience and room sounds to drums and instruments when tracking (Merging is working on an improved version of the reverb for a future update).

#### Expert mode

There are two modes of operation: Default and Expert. Default keeps it

simple, with one cue and a single send. Expert mode expands Anubis to the full five cues, three sends, mono bus routing, added fader controls and more.

#### Cue, monitor and mix

One of the great features of the Music Mission is the flexible control it offers to musicians and engineers. With a single Anubis, an engineer can monitor a mix in the control room, including simple speaker switching between two monitors, complete with 2.1 sub crossover control. At the same time, two performers can be tracking their parts, each receiving their own separate headphone cue mix expertly dialed in by the engineer, including the option of individual talkback to each. As the system expands, each performer can have their own Anubis next to them (they are mic stand mountable) to control their own mixes, and as you add a Horus or Hapi, you can track drums, a full band and more, all treated as one big mixing desk, that literally fits in the palm of your hand.

#### The story for now...

I am only beginning to scratch the surface of what Anubis is capable of, and who knows what other missions will be available in the future. With three button presses, you can return to the Monitor Mission as needed when you are finished tracking. It's worth noting that the Monitor Mission is not yet available for UNITE; you will need to switch back to ANEMAN.

A device this open-ended is a work in progress; this is good news—enhancements, bug fixes and new features can be easily incorporated when ready. Case in point: some minor things that I found missing between the hardware and software interface have already been addressed in the latest firmware update, and the Music Mission was only just released in May.

While it will take time to navigate and build up muscle and menu memory, I found the Music Mission to be an intuitive blend of the mixer in your DAW and a digital mixer. The full-featured Cue routing is some of the best I have seen or used in either scenario. And the sonic quality of the Anubis remains top-notch. ➔

**Price:** Anubis Pro \$1899; Anubis Premium \$2499; Anubis Pro SPS \$2099; Anubis Premium SPS \$2699  
**More from:** [merging.com](http://merging.com)