

The Trends TA10.2 Amplifier

Are We Serious?

By Jeff Dorgay



The Trends Audio TA 10.1 class T amplifier has been the darling of the internet for close to a year now, getting an equivalent amount of press in various audio related websites as well as a heated topic of conversation on numerous audio forums. When the chance to review one of the first 10.2 amplifiers came along, I was very curious to see just how much amplifier you can get for \$189. It turns out quite a bit, indeed.

The TA 10.2 is miniscule, only weighing about a pound (without power supply) and is smaller than the power supply that powers it. There is a volume control knob on the front, speaker output jacks and one pair of input jacks on the rear, along with an input for 12 volts DC. With one input and one output, setup is quick and easy.

To be a wise guy, I started with the big guns, putting the TA 10.2 in my reference system with a Naim 555 CD player and the GamuT S-7 speakers, wiring the system with Shunyata Aurora interconnects and Stratos SP speaker wire. Why not hook up a \$189 dollar amplifier to a six-figure system?

Very Big Sound in That Small Box

I'd be lying if I told you that the 10.2 had the weight and dynamics that my Burmester 011 preamp and 911 mk. 3 amplifier does, but it was damn good! Some of the graininess that I've heard with chip amplifiers was still there, but the top to bottom tonality was excellent and the bass control on the GamuT's was much better than I expected. When listening at modest levels, this amplifier gave a very strong performance on every kind of music but the most dynamic, because the GamuT speakers really do their best with more power.

While the 10.2 is not harsh sounding, it does throw a very wide soundstage, but a relatively two-dimensional one. All of that front to back depth and holographic imaging is what you pay the big bucks for, but again, comparing the 10.2 to a number of thousand dollar integrated amplifiers, was very good.

My audiophile buddies were quite shocked when they heard my system with the 10.2. One thought it was a headphone amplifier and upon picking it up, saw the massive Shunyata cables coming out of the back, only to realize I was running the whole system with this tiny little amplifier that isn't even the size of an output transformer on a modest sized tube amplifier.

Back to the Real World

Let's face it, no one is going to use the 10.2 like I did, but it proves the point that this is a phenomenal little amplifier. I tried a few other speakers and the 10.2 was a fantastic match for the 100db ZU Essence speakers, which only need a few watts to blast you out of the room. No matter how loud I wanted to rock out, the 10.2 was up to the task, with excellent bass weight and control.

But the best place for the 10.2 is the beginning audiophile/music lover. I assembled a system with the Trends amplifier, a mint pair of Spica TC-50's that I purchased on Audiogon for \$225 and my trusty Pioneer 563 universal player that can usually be found for about \$50. \$100 worth of Blue Jeans cable rounded out the package to



just under \$500 total for an incredibly musical system that takes up almost no space. I would have killed to have a system like this when I got into the hobby.

Mods, etc.

In the past, there have been quite a few mods available for the 10.1 amplifier, but I feel this defeats the purpose of a budget component. However, one tweak that is worthwhile is a large, 12 Volt battery. I'm sure you could modify one of the popular SLA batteries, similar to the type used by Red Wine Audio and a few others, but if you want to try battery power on the cheap, you can get a lantern battery from Radio Shack here:

<http://www.radioshack.com/product/index.jsp?productId=3740316>

Taking the 10.2 off the grid dramatically reduces the noise floor and takes a layer of grain out of the overall presentation. *(continued)*

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The highs became much less “electronic” sounding and in my budget system, dazzled everyone that heard it.

It doesn't get any better than this for \$189

Regardless of whether you need a second system for your garage, office or desktop, or just beginning your HiFi journey, I can't think of a better place to start if you can live with one source component. The Trends Audio 10.2 is a small box with mighty performance and is worthy of being paired with components considerably more expensive than its size might suggest. ●

The Trends TA-10.2 Amplifier

**MSRP: \$189.00, standard 10.2
\$249.00, SE model**

MANUFACTURER

Trends Audio

Unit E, 13/F,
World Tech Centre
95 How Ming Street
Kwun Tong, Hong Kong
852 2566 5740
www.trendsaudio.com

PERIPHERALS

Analog Source Technics SL-1200 w/ Sound HiFi Mods, Sumiko Blackbird

Phono Preamp Audio Research PH3 SE

Digital Source Pioneer 563, Marantz Pearl, Naim CD555

Speakers Harbeth Monitor 40.1, Spica TC-50, Verity Audio Sarastro II, Zu Essence