

Affordable\$\$Audio

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Trends Audio TA 10.1 Class T Amplifier

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Specifications:

Output Power: 2 x 15W @ 4ohm, 2 x 10W @ 8ohm

Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR) 98dB

Dynamic Range 98dB

THD+Noise: 0.03% @ 9W, 4ohm, 0.1% @ 11W 4ohm, 0.1% @ 6W 8ohm

High Power: 10% @ 15W 4ohm, 10% @ 10W 8ohm

Dimensions: (W)76mm x (H)46mm x (D)114mm[case only]/150mm[incl. sockets & knob]

Weight: 500g

Price: \$149

www.trendsaudio.com



Is this a great hobby or what? Recently I came across another fantastic audiophile bargain, the \$149.00 Trends Audio TA 10.1 Class T amplifier. Lots of great sound for the money! Trends Audio which sells products via the internet, is based in Hong Kong and utilizes the same TriPath TA2024 output module in the manufacture of the TA 10.1 that is used in the Sonic Impact Super T. Since both amplifiers are based on the same Class D technology they share a very similar sonic signature. However just like every competing audio product there are some significant differences, which did I prefer? You'll have to read on to find out.

The Trends Audio TA 10.1 is a neat and tidy little unit measuring 3"W X 2"H X 4 1/2" D. The nicely constructed metal enclosure is plated with a lightly textured silver matte finish which gives the amp a pleasing modern industrial look. The minimalist front faceplate has a volume knob and a blue LED to indicate power status; while the rear apron has a small power on or off toggle switch and gold plated RCA input jacks for the left and right channel. Additionally there are some decent 5 way speaker binding posts and input jack for the 12VDC power supply. Compared to the Sonic Impact the fit and finish is just a little better, I especially preferred the gold plated 5 way binding posts to those on the Sonic Impact Super T, they were more robust and better looking. The specs for each amp are identical; both are rated 10 watts into 8 Ohms and 15 watts into 4 Ohms.

Setup

Since every audio component sounds better after break-in, I used the Trends Audio TA 10.1 in a system with the Oppo DV970HD universal disc player and a pair of Infinity Primus 150 speakers for several weeks prior to doing any critical listening. I was very diligent to set the system up using the same care and consideration that I would with top of the line components. I secured the Primus 150 speakers on top of 24" lead shot and sand filled Plateau speaker stands using DAP "funtak". I placed the speakers in the same locations I use for my reference Paradigm S2 speakers, 53" out from the rear wall and 12" out from the side walls angled in on axis to the listening position. I also made sure to utilize a good quality interconnect between the Sonic Impact and the Oppo, in this case a pair of Eichmann Express Six with silver bullet RCA plugs. Additionally I used a pair of Zebra Cables ZC-SP12SDs speaker cables between the amp and the Infinity speakers. All listening took place in my well damped 18'L X 13'W X 7' 6"H basement listening room where I keep my reference system.

Listening

When it came to listening, I tried both amplifiers in my system and discovered that they had strong similarities, sounding warm yet detailed, and of course the better the source component the better the sonic result.

Comparing the Sonic Impact Super T amp to the Trends Audio TA 10.1 revealed that the most salient difference was that of dynamics. The Sonic Impact just had a little more hitch in its giddy-up than the Trends Audio; that said the TA 10.1 had a little more liquid holographic midrange than the Super T. For instance while listening to *Miles Ahead* the big band collaboration between Miles Davis and Gil Evans recorded in 1957, on track four "My Ship" the percussion and bass was slightly more pronounced while listening to the Sonic Impact Super T. However the Trends Audio TA 10.1 provided just a hair more presence and midrange detail and it seemed more tube like. The instruments seemed to come out of slightly blacker background and Mile's trumpet was more palpable and clear.

I inserted Miles Davis' CD *Kind of Blue* into the Oppo's drawer and gave it a spin. On track one, "So what" both amplifiers gave an excellent presentation providing a good sense of space and air around the instruments. The Super T had a slight edge in bass response and Mile's trumpet sounded smooth and distinguished, but the TA10.1 had a slight edge in palpability over the Super T. Coltrane's tenor and Adderley's alto sax were clearly distinguishable from one another while playing through both amps but the TA 10.1 provided a slightly clearer sonic picture of the performance.



So we know that the Trends Audio TA 10.1 sounds great with Jazz but what about party music? I decided to play some Bob Marley and the Wailers from their compilation disc, *Legend*. Track fifteen "Jamming" had great pace and rhythm, the bass and percussive elements were clear and concise. Marley's voice blended nicely with the background singers, keyboards and the guitars without becoming too diffuse. You could really kick back and enjoy the music without feeling you were missing something. Yes, dynamically there were limitations, the sound becoming compressed when the amp was pressed too hard but overall it sounded very musical.

With women's vocals the amp TA 10.1 provided a nice warm presentation. I played one of my favorite tracks off of Diana Kralls' CD *Lovescenes*, track two "Peel me grape" and just as with the Sonic Impact Super T the air around the piano and Diana's voice was clearly disseminated. Krall's husky, sultry voice was warm and inviting, just a tad more holographic and real than with the Sonic Impact Super T.

My reference Paradigm S2 monitors are the most efficient speakers I own they are rated 90db for one watt at one meter. Using these with the TA 10.1 really allowed the amp to shine. Not only did the TA 10.1 sound more clear and articulate through the Paradigms but the playback volume was substantially higher which added some additional dynamic impact to the music. I really think this amp would be a superb match with some high efficiency speakers or horn loaded speakers which would provide almost SET like sound quality for just a few dollars.

Conclusion

My thought while I sat listening to this minimalist amp is why can't the mainstream audio manufacturers like Sony and JVC build something that sounds this good? Is it that most people can't recognize good sound? I believe that most people just don't know that affordable products like this exist. In any case the Trends Audio TA 10.1 is a super little amp for a beginning audiophile on a budget, a second system or for those who want a nice sounding amp for use in a small space such as a dorm room. Although there are better amps, there are none at this price point, just make sure to match it with some efficient speakers for best results. I preferred the higher quality fit and finish and the more holographic imaging of the Trends Audio TA 10.1 to the slightly more

dynamic Sonic Impact Super T and found that given the choice most people agreed with me. I heartily recommend this little amp without reservation! Go spread the word!

Next month I will be reviewing another Trends Audio product their UD 10.1 USB DAC which looks like another killer product for the budget audiophile.

Associated Equipment.

Audio Research SP16 Preamplifier, Audio Research VS110 Amplifier
Conrad Johnson MV-60SE Amplifier, Primare D30.2 CD Player
Oppo HD 970 Universal Player, VPI HW19 MKIV Turntable
Rega RB 600 Tonearm, Clearaudio Beta S MM Cartridge
Paradigm S2 Signiture Monitors, Usher S520 Monitors
Infinity Primus 150 Monitors, Rega Brio 2000 Integrated Amp
Discovery Essence Interconnects , Discovery Essential Speaker Cables
Eichmann Express Six Interconnects, Zebra Cables ZC-SP14DBI Speaker Cables

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