

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

TEAC HA-507/AP-507

Hi-fi equipment is adapting to the trend away from room-filling stacks of electronics, and this new combination from a famous name takes things to the next level



TEAC HA-507

Type Preamplifier/headphone amp

Price £1899

Inputs Two sets of line-ins on RCAs; two sets on balanced XLRs; pass-through option on RCA2/XLR2

Outputs on RCAs and Balanced XLRs; unbalanced headphones on 3.5mm and 6.3mm sockets, balanced on XLR and 4.4mm sockets

Accessories supplied Remote handset

Dimensions (WxHxD) 29 × 8.45 × 24.3cm

TEAC AP-507

Type Stereo power amplifier

Price £1899

Inputs RCA, XLR

Outputs One pair of speakers

Power output 70Wpc into 8ohms, 125Wpc into 4ohms; maximum output 95W/170W

Bridgeable into mono, 230W output into 8ohms, 350W max

Dimensions (WxHxD) 29 × 8.45 × 27.1cm

teac.co.jp

Compact hi-fi is nothing new: we've had midi- and micro-systems for many years, and arguably some classic hi-fi, such as the recently reinvented QUAD 33/303 preamplifier and power amp, would fit the description. And in modern homes such an approach, combined with a relatively small, but high-quality, pair of speakers, makes a lot of sense: in many new-build homes, space is at a premium, and while a large TV screen can be fitted on a wall, the problem of where to put the hi-fi might lead many to settle for nothing more than a speaker connected via Bluetooth to a phone, tablet or computer.

Being Japanese, and thus used to homes where space is at a premium but high-quality sound is desirable, it's no surprise that TEAC has for some time offered a range of small hi-fi separates, starting with the entry-level 300 series. Now it's done some reinvention of its more upmarket 500 series, creating some intriguing -07 iterations with even more of a sense of high-end audio, but in miniature.

There's certainly much to like about the HA-507 and AP-507 we have here: without any reference for size, you might think this was a full-size preamplifier/headphone amp – the HA-507 – and stereo

power amplifier in the form of the AP-507. However, unbox them and set them up, and you soon discover they are truly tiny by high-end hi-fi standards: at just 29x27cm, the 'footprint' of each unit is not much more than the size of an A4 sheet of paper, and each stands less than 8.5cm tall.

Neither is either heavy, so you could easily place them on substantial, but not overly massive, shelves: the combined weight of the pair is around 9kg. And

The pricing and – more crucially – the performance both show these to be small of size, but of very serious intent

despite that, both units have that reassuring air of solidity and substance, greatly aided by smooth controls operating with appealing precision. There's no sense here of cute little units as some kind of parody of full-size hi-fi components: instead, the pricing and – more crucially – the performance both show these to be small of size, but of very serious intent.

That's as well, given that the HA-507 and AP-507 aren't exactly lacking

competition at just under £1900 apiece – for that kind of money more than a few very good pre/power combinations suggest themselves. But it soon becomes clear that, apart from the jewel-like appeal of their size and specifications, the TEACs more than come up to expectations.

The HA-507 may double as a preamplifier and headphone amp, but it's a purist all-analogue design: to connect digital sources you'll have to opt for the UD-507, at the same price, which has onboard digital-to-analogue conversion and can be used with a computer as a digital source to create a streaming system, while the 500 series also has a network player, a CD transport and a standalone phono stage for a record player.

The preamp has two sets of stereo line inputs on RCA sockets, and two on balanced XLRs, with the option of pass-through on RCA 2 and XLR 2, for a source component with its own volume control or a surround processor. Balanced and unbalanced outputs to a power amplifier are provided, along with headphone outputs on 3.5mm and 6.3mm single-ended and XLR and 4.4mm balanced, along with a three-position switchable gain to allow the amp to drive even demanding headphone loads.

SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The TEAC amplifiers will easily support a high-quality system with excellent results

EVERSOLO DMP-A6

The EverSolo DMP-A6 is a compact network player with a very persuasive sound and superb flexibility



FYNE AUDIO F55E SPEAKERS

With their clever Isoflare concentric drivers, the Fyne Audio F55E speakers deliver a big, bold, but focused sound with the TEACs



The options here are chosen using little flip-switches, leaving just simple rotaries for volume, balance and source selection, while the accompanying remote handset is similarly uncomplicated, with the functions you'll need and nothing more.

A 12V trigger connection allows the power amplifier to be fired up or put into standby via the remote control, but that's about the only frill here.

The AP-507 power amplifier uses the NCOREx digital amplifier technology from Dutch company Hypex, which is both cool-running and energy-efficient, as well as having excellent speaker-driving capability. This technology is found in an ever-increasing range of amplifiers, where it has proved a remarkable performer: here it's used in a dual-mono configuration, fed from a substantial toroidal transformer, and delivers 125W per channel into 4ohms, and 70Wpc into 8ohms, which is more than sufficient even for difficult speakers.

However, if you want even more power, at the flip of a switch and a slight

rearrangement of the connections, it can be turned into a 230W mono amplifier – all you have to do is add a second AP-507 for a massively powerful, yet still very compact, amplification system.

PERFORMANCE

Whether you'd need to take that bridged route will be a matter of personal taste, given how well this little amplifier pair drives a wide range of speakers. There's plenty of power when required, either for playback at high levels or simply to handle the dynamics of music. There's nothing scaled down in the way the TEACs play everything from solo piano to large-scale orchestral music: the sound is both free-breathing and richly detailed, with a fine sense of space and ambience and beautifully rendered instrumental and vocal detail. That's as true whether the TEACs are fed from a relatively modest network player such as one of the HiFi Rose or EverSolo models or – slightly hilariously – my

reference Naim ND555, almost an order of magnitude more expensive than the TEAC combination.

It's also adept at driving and controlling a wide range of speakers, from high-quality bookshelf designs to large floorstanders one might consider over-ambitious for amplification so compact, reminding one that these aren't miniature amplifiers, but the real thing, just made smaller.

Best of all, there's never any sense that the power amplifier is working hard, especially if you turn off those power meters on its front panel: just as the preamp will drive even demanding headphone loads with ease, so the power amplifier just gets on with the job, to the point that it's always amusing playing music at high levels with this combination, or just relaxing and allowing them to glide through a more intimate recording.

There's so much to like about this amplifier system: even if you're not tight on space, the TEACs are worthy of very serious consideration. **G**

Or you could try ...

Not so long ago, just about every hi-fi range had relatively affordable preamplifiers and power amplifiers, but these have become something of a rarity, and the preserve of the extreme high end. But such a set-up has its appeal, not just in the optimisation of each section of an amplifier system to its task, but also in its flexibility of positioning. For example, using long balanced interconnects, the preamp can be placed close to your source components, or close to hand for operation, with the power amp away near the speakers. Or with two mono amps, you can have an amp behind each speaker.

QUAD 33/303

The QUAD 33/303, in its recent revived form, is a close competitor for the TEACs: the preamplifier is compact, and like the TEAC HA-507 an all-analogue design, though it does have the phono inputs the TEAC lacks. Meanwhile the 303 power amplifier is small enough to be hidden

away, and can be bridged to create a 140W, mono amplifier. **Find out more at quad-hifi.co.uk**

Michi's X3 Series 2

As an alternative to a pre/power combination, Michi's X3 Series 2 integrated amplifier has much to offer, with analogue inputs including moving magnet phono, an array of digital ins including USB Type B for computer audio, and Bluetooth, and a massive 350W output into a 4 ohm load. It also sounds superb. **More information at rotel.com**

NAD M33

Complete integration comes in the form of the NAD M33, which combines the BluOS streaming platform with an amplifier capable of 200W per channel, a huge range of input flexibility both analogue and digital, DIRAC room correction and expandability via slot-in cards for extra features. **See nadelectronics.com for further details**

