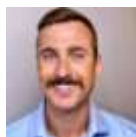




Serendipity squared?



I was considering upgrading the Auris Bluetooth DAC I recently purchased from Amazon. I needed to get my music from point A to Point B. The Auris served its purpose; however, after about a year of using it and making upgrades elsewhere in my system, the Auris was starting to show signs that it was not meeting my expectations anymore. I currently use Apple Music as my primary music source and transfer the music via Bluetooth to my system. I know some audiophiles will cringe reading that; however, I am still very new. There is still a long road ahead of me in this hobby.

When I looked at potentially upgrading my DAC, I had some specifics in mind. It needed to have Bluetooth and USB capabilities and volume control. I also hoped for a bigger soundstage, more music separation, realism, dimensionality, and tighter/clear bass. Most importantly, it needed to be relatively affordable. Scouring the internet, looking at different brands, and reading countless reviews, I started to figure out what DAC I would go with. Well, that all changed after I got a phone call from our fearless publisher, Clement Perry. He said he had the TEAC UD-507 USB DAC/Headphone Amplifier/Preamp.

When I initially received the TEAC UD-507 USB DAC/Headphone Amplifier/Preamp, I had never heard of the TEAC brand. TEAC, a Japanese brand, has been around since 1953. TEAC has made significant history over the years. TEAC created the world's first slow-motion camera for the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, a TEAC reel-to-reel cassette deck was used to create R2D2's voice for Star Wars in 1977, and Bruce Springsteen's album "Nebraska" was recorded on a TEAC multi-track cassette tape recorder. TEAC has decades of experience designing and building high-quality audio/visual products.



The TEAC UD-507 USB DAC/Headphone Amplifier/Preamp was released in June 2024. According to the TEAC website, “TEAC is proud to announce the release of the model UD 507, a completely redesigned 500 Series DAC/Preamp/Headphone Amplifier with high-end 700 Series design concept in a compact A4 size package”. The TEAC UD-507 has many high-end features that impress any audiophile. From the TEAC website, *“The UD-507 is equipped with our proprietary “TRDD 5” discrete DAC, designed with musicality as the top priority, following in the footsteps of the discrete DAC design applied to the acclaimed 701 series. TEAC Brand Manager, Jo Yoshida states, “The most important feature of the UD-507 is the newly designed and manufactured “TRDD 5” discrete D/A converter.* For the audiophiles that want to use the TEAC UD-507 as a headphone preamplifier,” The TEAC UD-507 is undoubtedly built and designed to be a workhorse reference DAC/Preamp. Weighing in at 10.8lb, it offers a solid, high-quality build. The TEAC UD-507 is carefully packaged and has a standard remote and AC cord.



The TEAC UD-507 has many features built into the system. One of the features that I enjoy is the up-conversion. As I mentioned earlier, since I primarily use streaming and Bluetooth as my music source, I deal with a loss in information and compression. The up-conversion allows me to ensure that my music is at the highest possible resolution (up to 384kHz). The nice aspect of this feature is that you don’t have to use it if you don’t want to. It’s an optional setting.

The TEAC UD-507 also has USB ports in the unit's front (USB-C) and back (USB-B). I tested the USB feature using the USB-C port I had around the house. The upconversion is significantly noticeable. Additionally, USBs have more sound and power than Bluetooth. For those who have invested in high-quality cables, the TEAC UD-507 will bring out the best aspects of your preferred cables. For those with a library of digital files stored on their computer, the TEAC UD507 allows its users to play their music using the TEAC audio player for either their PC or Mac. The TEAC music playback software uses its DSD(Direct Stream Digital) for its software; this allows the user to play their music up to 768kHz.

TEAC intentionally focused on creating a DAC/Preamplifier built to last. The TEAC UD-507 is designed to be a reference DAC/Preamplifier for any system within a modest budget. With so much attention dedicated to the build and technical aspects, the real question is: how does it sound?



Unquestionably, TEAC devoted the same, if not more, attention to the sound quality. The TEAC UD-507 checks off all the sonic boxes regarding my listening experience. For the last month, I have sat in front of my system, dissecting every song for hours. The TEAC UD-507 has taken my sound system to the next level. TEAC designed the UD-507 to impress even some jaded or skeptical audiophiles.

To illustrate, first and foremost, the immersiveness of the soundstage. Sound immersion was achieved when all aspects of my system worked harmoniously. The soundstage extended above and beyond the physical boundaries of my Tekton Lore loudspeakers. Though not large floorstanders, the Lores appeared as monoliths as the music radiated and transcended beyond them. The soundstage gained greater depth, making my listening room appear bigger as though the musicians were on a grander stage. The ambiance floated above my head, simmers low to the floor, and creeps in my peripherals. Building on the improved soundstage, there is an improved sense of focus and separation alongside greater image specificity. Surprisingly, each instrument and vocal possessed more space to help spotlight their performance. I find my eyes darting around the room, trying to identify where the sound is coming from.

One of the benefits of the improved separation is that the vocals have significantly become more realistic. I am beginning to have the feeling of the artist performing in the same room as me. The clarity of the voices is exceptional. From the highest highs to the lowest lows, the whispers, and the power of a singer belting out a note, the TEAC UD-507 accentuates the performance. The realism and clarity of the voices float in the center of the room as the accompanying instruments fill the space around the voice.

Equally important, I have experienced faster sound in my music. I can hear this, especially with string and percussion instruments; there is a tighter and cleaner stop and start to the sound. With the added bass grip and speed, I noticed the presence and dynamic prowess of the low-end improved. The bass is fuller, better focused, and punchier as well.

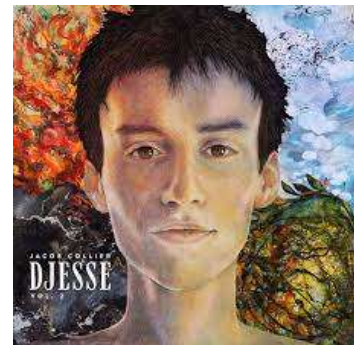
A couple of songs helped demonstrate the TEAC UD-507's capabilities. First was Bolero/Suzanne, "Rene Marie, Live at Jazz Standard." The song opens up with Rene's perfectly

focused voice and a quiet echo. Her voice's speed and clarity soon fade as a snare drum begins to tap away in the corner of the stage. There is an excellent separation between Rene's voice, the snare drum, bass, and piano. As the song builds and fills the room, there is no loss in detail or realism in any of the components of the song. The TEAC UD-507 brings out the power of Rene's voice, which gives me chills during each listen. The recording is warm and silky, and the TEAC UD-507 only enhances the characteristics.



TEAC speaks very highly about how immersive the soundstage is on the UD-507. I agree with them because as I write this review. I have sat in my listening room for the past few months, listening to hundreds of songs, and the TEAC UD-507 has a way of enveloping my space in sound. It never feels loud or overpowered; it's complete and three-dimensional. Most surprisingly, each song, whether jazz, rock, classical, electronic, or pop, is showcased with a sonic portrait I have never encountered before the installation of the TEAC UD-507.

For example, listening to *Carolina On My Mind*, from Jacob Collier Piano Ballads (Live From The Djesse World Tour 2022), it's easy to feel you are in the concert alongside the fans. Jacob's voice floats and fills the room; his piano sounds so natural and clear; the part in his song, when the crowd starts singing, paints an image that transports your mind and places you in the concert hall; you'll want to sing along with the crowd. *Carolina On My Mind* is just one of countless songs where I was able to experience the TEAC UD-507's soundstage and immersion. I encourage you to listen for yourself.



My overall impression of the TEAC UD-507 has been a positive experience. I like the amount of features that the TEAC UD-507 has. It allows you the flexibility to choose your playback preference. The build for the UD-507 is solid. TEAC took care in building a solid, reliable component; nothing feels cheap or plastic, and even the remote is a solid build. TEAC engineered the UD-507 with the listener in mind. It lives up to and exceeds the expectations and claims. I have been pleased with the overall performance of the TEAC UD-507. The price



point for the TEAC UD-507 comes in at \$2,099. While it would be an investment for a system, this can certainly be a reference component that would last years. Looking back at TEAC's history and track record, the UD-507 was built to last and has been enjoyed for years.

Honorable Mention: TEAC UD-507

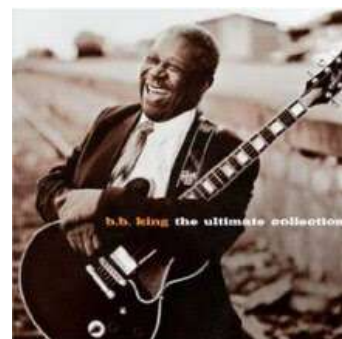
In addition to receiving the TEAC UD-507, I received their accompanying CD transport in the TEAC PD-505T. Now I will be the first to admit I haven't used a CD player for a very long time. Years! There are audiophiles out there that still enjoy the sound of a CD. With that in mind, TEAC has built the PD-505T for the CD enthusiast.



Regarding the build quality, TEAC has devoted the same attention to detail to the PD-505T as they did to the UD-507. The PD-505T has the same compact A4 style packaging, perfect to fit on a desktop. The chassis is an all-aluminum, full-metal build that offers a great solid product. The PD-505T has a semi-floating top panel; instead of being screwed to the chassis, the top panel is partially fixed to the side panels; this design is claimed to offer a more open sound.

I dug into an old box of CDs to search for some of my old reference CDs. I came across a gem that was hiding away: "b.b. King, The Ultimate Collection." Surprised that it was still in perfect condition, I put it in the PD-505T and hit play. I have the PD-505T connected to the UD-507 using a simple coaxial digital cable. The UD-507 is connected to my SteinMusic integrated via RCA interconnects.

The opening track, "Three O'Clock Blues," filled the room as King's guitar Lucille sang and wailed. I was impressed with the sound quality, and I kept switching back and forth between the CD and digital versions of the song. There was no discernible difference between either version of the song. I found the same focus, precision, and vast soundstage using the PD-505T as with the UD-507. Hearing the impressive quality of a CD, I decided to spend more time listening to a format I thought was passe.



Bob James' "Feel Like Making Live." It's one of the best mixed live recordings I know of. Bob James has meticulous attention to recreating the live feel of being in the recording studio. After placing the CD in the PD-505T and hitting play, I listened closely. "Feel Like Making Live" is a familiar album, so I tried to listen for lost or gained nuances. I hit play on the first song on the

album Angela (Theme From Taxi)” and listened closely. I was pleasantly surprised that, yet again, the PD-505T could reproduce the same high-quality sound. I could not notice any noticeable difference between streaming and CD.

The TEAC PD-505T is an excellent CD transport. It maintains the integrity of the recordings on the CDs but, more importantly, offers a clear, realistic, bold, and beautiful presentation. The build is solid and designed to be a long-lasting component. As mentioned, I am not a CD user, although the TEAC UD-507 gives me pause. It will appeal to many CD enthusiasts, especially when paired with the TEAC UD-507. Coming in at \$1,399, the PD-505T is an investment. But if you are in the market for a reliable and great-sounding CD transport, this could be the component you are looking for.



Overall, I’ve enjoyed my experience with TEAC’s UD-507 and PD-505T combo. TEAC makes a solid product. TEAC’s products are a long-lasting reference component for any system, especially mine. TEAC’s price point falls in the more affordable segment regarding Hi-Fi pricing. However, its performance soared above what I expected at this price point. If you’re like me and just starting your journey of building a Hi-Fi system, TEAC offers a place to start that will take your system to the next level. Give TEAC a listen and be the judge for yourself. I hope you get the same enjoyment out of their products as I did.

Richard Doron

