

SECRETS of and Home Theater High Fidelity®

Aurender A10 Network Music Server-Player Review

The Aurender A10 is a sleek and powerful network music server/player that takes digital music sources to the audiophile level in the age of downloads and streaming. It features dual mono DACs, 4TB of hard drive storage, and an amazing and easy-to-use app. I got the chance to demo an A10 recently to see just how well it performs. Here is the short intro from Aurender's website:

"The Aurender A10 Music Player with high performance digital-to-analog converter. With 4TB of internal hard disk drive and one 120GB solid-state drive cache for playback, the A10 is the perfect solution for those replacing CD Players. All Aurender models include the dedicated Aurender Conductor App, hailed by reviewers worldwide for its performance and intuitive operation. iPad App was developed in house with managing large music databases in mind, providing exceptionally fast browsing and searching of your favorite music. All Aurender Servers and Players fully support the service. Enjoy 35 million lossless CD quality music tracks with the world's best sounding Music Server. You can also easily play music from your NAS, on Aurender's HDD or music from the TIDAL service using the same app." – Aurender.com



DIMENSIONS AND WEIGHT:
16.93" x 2.2" x 13.9", 22.5lbs

SOLID STATE DRIVE FOR SYSTEM AND CACHE:
120GB

MUSIC STORAGE:
4TB (2.5" Hard Disk Drive)

POWER:
Full-Linear

DISPLAY:
3.0" AMOLED

DIGITAL AUDIO OUTPUT:
USB Audio Class 2.0

DIGITAL AUDIO INPUT:
S/PDIF Optical up to 24-bit/192kHz

OTHER I/O:
Gigabit Ethernet, USB Port x 2

AUDIO OUTPUT:
Unbalanced(RCA): 2Vrms / Balanced(XLR): 4Vrms

VOLUME CONTROL:
-90 dB ~ 0dB, 0.5 dB step Velocity Sensitive Operation

USB AUDIO OUTPUT:
PCM: up to 32-bit/384kHz DSD: DSD64, DSD128/DoP Mode

DAC CHIP:
AK4490(AKM) x 2 (Dual-Mono Design)

THD+N MIN.:
112dB, IMD(SMPTE) Min. -113 dB

THD:
(1KHz 2.5Vrms XLR output) 0.00013%

DYNAMIC RANGE:
MAX 128 dB (CCITT filter)

STEREO CROSSTALK BETTER THAN:
S135dB, 20-20kHz.

PRICE:
\$5500 USD.

WARRANTY:
Two years parts and labor.

The App



Jumping right into the app, I could easily find any song, artist or album I could think of. It was very snappy and intuitive. I really like the Queue feature where I could select any track and put it into a list to play, without interrupting the song I am currently playing. I was able to select five songs and put them into a personal playlist on the fly with ease. Being able to use most music apps was nice and the app responded quickly without lag. The downsides were that some buttons were oddly shaped in ways that made them hard to press if you have larger hands, like the search and favorites buttons. I found myself hitting the wrong ones at times. Although this unit comes with a remote, the app is really the intended way to control it. I looked at the remote briefly, but primarily used the app for control.

The Music

The Aurender A10's total harmonic distortion is reported to be at just 0.00013% which is what makes its audio quality so clear and crisp. If you plan to use external sources, the A10 supports PCM rates up to 32/384, DSD64 and DSD128 via DoP over the USB inputs. I am fan of great-sounding DACs and the one found in the A10 does not disappoint. It's Aurender's own unique version of the AKM AK4490 DAC, which processes the PCM and DSD streams in their native forms to provide cleaner sound. The chipset has also been customized for MQA decoding. And as I mentioned before, it operates in a dual-mono configuration, hand in hand with the dual-mono linear power supplies. All this careful design and component selection is what makes the audio experience of the A10 so amazing. I listened to an 80's playlist and it sounded full and clear. The unit was thoroughly warmed up but the I missed the analog turntable feel. Nonetheless, I thought it was an excellent music source that justifies its premium price tag.



Aurender A10 Network Music Server Inputs

The Unit Itself

This is the part of the A10 that gets rocky, the unit is finished nicely and weighs in at just over 20lbs. My biggest gripe concerns the four buttons on the front. It is almost impossible to make out their purpose. Since this unit is best controlled with an app and includes a remote, it made me wonder why they were even included in the first place, the faceplate would have looked so much cleaner without them. Now for the coolest feature; in the app, you can change the AMOLED display on the front to show a track list or a cool looking McIntosh-like meter. I loved its clean style, it was almost lifelike thanks to the AMOLED technology behind the screen. On the back of the unit we have the standard balanced and unbalanced analog outputs along with optical and USB inputs and an Ethernet port.



Network Music Server AMOLED Screen

Conclusion

In summary, the Aurender A10 Music Server is well-built, sounds amazing, and has a smartly-designed app to control it. It is priced at \$5500 so it may not be the most affordable option, but the app and build quality are second to none. And don't forget to pick up a nice tablet to control it with, it's far better than trying to use your phone. If you're looking for a great way to simply enjoy and store music, the Aurender A10 Music Server/Player is a great choice!