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# Morel MPS 4.400

## Amplifier Review

↓  
*Morel's cleverly designed amplifier that bucks against the Class D trend.*



**“FOR THE MOREL BRAND, ‘DECENT’ PERFORMANCE SIMPLY ISN’T GOOD ENOUGH. MOREL HAS DEVELOPED AN ENVIABLE REPUTATION FOR PRODUCING SOME OF THE BEST POSSIBLE SOUNDING GEAR ON THE PLANET...”**

**A**s a function of running my business and writing reviews for PASMAG, I get to see a lot of amplifiers, and I’ll be the first to admit it’s fun to see what’s coming in the future and where trends are heading. It also seems like we live in a world of “shock and awe,” where the more grandiose or high tech a product is, the more likely it is to strike an emotional chord with consumers and sell. More often than not, if something is professed to be “leading edge tech,” even if it is highly flawed, people buy in and gravitate to it. Lately, almost every car-oriented amp that shows up here is based on some type of Class D topology. Sometimes that’s best because technology has come a long way in the last 10 years and several Class D car amplifiers have gone from being barely good enough for subwoofers, to decent full range performers. As you’d expect, those better sounding versions only use the very latest technology, and consequently, are quite expensive. So, to get really

good sound, you have to spend a lot of money.

Well, for the Morel brand, “decent” performance simply isn’t good enough. Morel has developed an enviable reputation for producing some of the best possible sounding gear on the planet, while remaining in the affordable price category. Every Morel product carries the Morel stamp of quality, a distinctive blend of technological innovation, daring design, and superb sound. When it came time to develop an affordable car amplifier that could maximize the performance of their loudspeakers, the Morel design engineers simply couldn’t find a Class

D solution that would provide the sonics they were happy with. Rather than compromise the audio performance just for the sake of following current trends, they approached the problem from a whole new angle by developing the MPS 4.400 amplifier with Class AB topology for tried and true audiophile performance. As an ancillary benefit, this design choice also eliminated the common radio reception issues caused by Class D interference, and ensured maximum sonic performance at all times.



**FEATURES**

The \$399.99 MPS 4.400 is a four-channel amplifier rated at 70x4 into four ohms, and 100x4 into two ohms. It can be bridged to three or two channels for system design flexibility, and will develop 200x2 when bridged into four ohms.

To compensate for the loss of some power efficiency compared to a Class D amp, the MPS 4.400 uses a high-mass thermally-engineered heatsink that dissipates heat more efficiently. The end panels are vented to allow maximum airflow through the amplifier and incorporate robust steel mounting feet. This high-efficiency heatsink allows the amp to be almost the same physical size as a typical Class D amp, but with better thermal performance.

The heatsink measures a compact 12.4 x 6.7 x 2 inches, and is designed with all of the connections recessed along the leading edge for a clean look and great protection. The control adjustments are discreetly top-mounted and covered by an aluminum plate secured by two screws. Controls are straightforward and well-marked, there are front and rear gain pots and 40- to 400-Hz variable frequency pots for the switchable and second order high- and low-pass crossovers.

The signal input uses a fully balanced differential front end design for maximum audio performance and noise rejection. Signal input can be as high as 10 volts, and the amplifier comes with special low impedance high-to-low level connections, in case you want to drive it with an OEM system. To aid installation ease even further, the MPS 4.400 can be configured to turn on with a traditional remote wire, audio signal, or the DC offset on the audio output of most radios.

Inside the amplifier, there are audiophile grade components throughout, with high fidelity Texas Instrument op-amps and ultra-



**“INSIDE THE AMPLIFIER, THERE ARE AUDIOPHILE GRADE COMPONENTS THROUGHOUT, WITH HIGH FIDELITY TEXAS INSTRUMENT OP-AMPS AND ULTRA-LOW TOLERANCE SURFACE-MOUNT PARTS.”**

low tolerance surface-mount parts. Four high-current MOSFETS are used in the power supply, and four pairs of complementary bipolar transistors perform the audio output switching duties.

An onboard microprocessor controls the protection and thermal management functions, and is fast enough to eliminate the need for onboard fusing.

**LISTENING**

Regular readers of my reviews know that I listen to a lot of jazz, classic rock, and acoustic music, and with this being a Morel product, I wanted to really push the limits of its sonic performance. Consequently, I put the MPS 4.400 through the paces with high-resolution 24/96 and 24/192 recordings from Cannonball Adderley, Yes, King Crimson, Jethro Tull, Thelonious Monk, and Queen.

This music was reproduced with a smooth natural-sounding midrange, a large soundstage, and very articulate and controlled bass. Cannonball’s solo in *Work Song* showed a level of detail in the mix I seldom experience with a car-oriented product. During a long listening session, the Morel amp raised my overall listening enjoyment and continued to impress. I’d almost forgotten how good a properly designed Class AB car amp could sound. Your

butt will get fatigued from sitting before your ears with this amp. There were no digital artifacts and none of the “hard edginess” to the sound that’s commonly apparent on lower-end Class D offerings. The MPS 4.400 produces exceptional sound for the money, characterized by low noise, a natural timbre with great transparency, and a well-controlled bottom end. It has few sonic drawbacks and can definitely hang with other very

high fidelity components, as it did with my reference Yamaha CD-2100 high definition CD player and Morel Virtus speakers.

The Morel MPS 4.400 doesn’t make any grandiose claims, nor does it depend on the latest technology. Rather, it uses proven circuitry that is still found in some of the world’s most respected [and expensive] home amplifiers, and is accepted everywhere as a reference standard.



**CONCLUSION**

**SOMETIMES IT PAYS TO LOOK OUTSIDE THE CURRENT TREND OR NORM AND TAKE A MORE THOROUGHLY DEVELOPED AND PROVEN PATH. THAT’S EXACTLY THE CASE WITH THE MOREL MPS 4.400 AMPLIFIER. RATHER THAN SIMPLY FOLLOW A POPULAR TREND, THE FOLKS AT MOREL USED THEIR EARS AND THEIR ETHICS TO PRODUCE A PRODUCT THAT HAS A MINIMUM AMOUNT OF COMPROMISE. THE END RESULT IS AN AMPLIFIER THAT ANYONE WOULD BE HAPPY TO LISTEN TO FOR MANY YEARS, BECAUSE UNLIKE THE LATEST FAD, GOOD SOUNDING MUSIC NEVER GOES OUT OF STYLE. P.A.S.**