



► Perreux éloquence 250i

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Translated by: Mr. Soren Vittrup, Audiocompagniet, Denmark

Introduction

With price and power in mind, the Perreux éloquence Series 250i is a very compact amplifier that does not make much fuss, and it will fit on most shelves. Depth is barely 35 cm, but still there was space for a 1000VA toroidal transformer and eight power supply filter capacitors with a total capacity of 44000µF (100V). You will also find separate printed circuit boards for the output stage and one for the preamp section which has its own transformer of 35VA. There is not much space left in the compact cabinet. The parts are of very good quality – with the exception of the RCA jacks, which was also one of my complaints, when big brother R200i was reviewed.

The cabinet is constructed of two steel frames that hold sides, top and bottom, and front and rear together. Top, back panel and bottom are made of 2mm aluminium plate, the sides are two powerful cooling profiles, while the front plate is made of an almost 2 cm thick aluminium plate! Indeed, a good solid and well-built cabinet. Design of the front is perhaps a little straightforward compared with other products from Perreux.

The front has a minimum of buttons and is dominated by the large volume button. The control is not a traditional volume potentiometer; instead it is a rotary encoder. On the front panel you will find an input for iPod or similar and a headphone output socket. In addition, there is also a large blue liquid crystal display that shows input selection, volume and additional information and settings as you enter the menu. The 250i's menu is very comprehensive enables you set all sorts of different settings. A full review of these settings will fill an entire article, so I'd recommend a look in the manual on the Perreux website if you are curious.



Some of the most interesting features are: variable gain and resistance settings of the phono stage, DAC settings and gain for each input, which is convenient when you test the difference between balanced / unbalanced inputs! Furthermore, it is possible to disconnect pre- and power amplifier from each other and thus use power stages separately, which I tried during reviewing éloquence 250i with surprising results!

The back is filled with sockets. There are two sets of speaker outputs, but these are not A & B sets, but simply an opportunity to facilitate bi-wiring if you need this. There are five unbalanced inputs, one of which by default is “pass through” to the input of a home cinema preamp. You can change this in the extensive menu, and all inputs can be bypassed for this use. You will also find input and output sockets for pre and power amp stages. These are only active



when you have selected them in the menu. Last but not least, there are balanced input connectors.

When the optional plug-in RIAA and DAC stages are mounted, one phono input and five digital inputs are added. There are two BNC connectors (RCA adapter supplied), two optical inputs and a USB input. The package includes both BNC and USB cable.



Everything is elegantly designed and made, and includes a plastic remote control. But a more exotic type made of aluminium should be planned. The included one works perfectly.

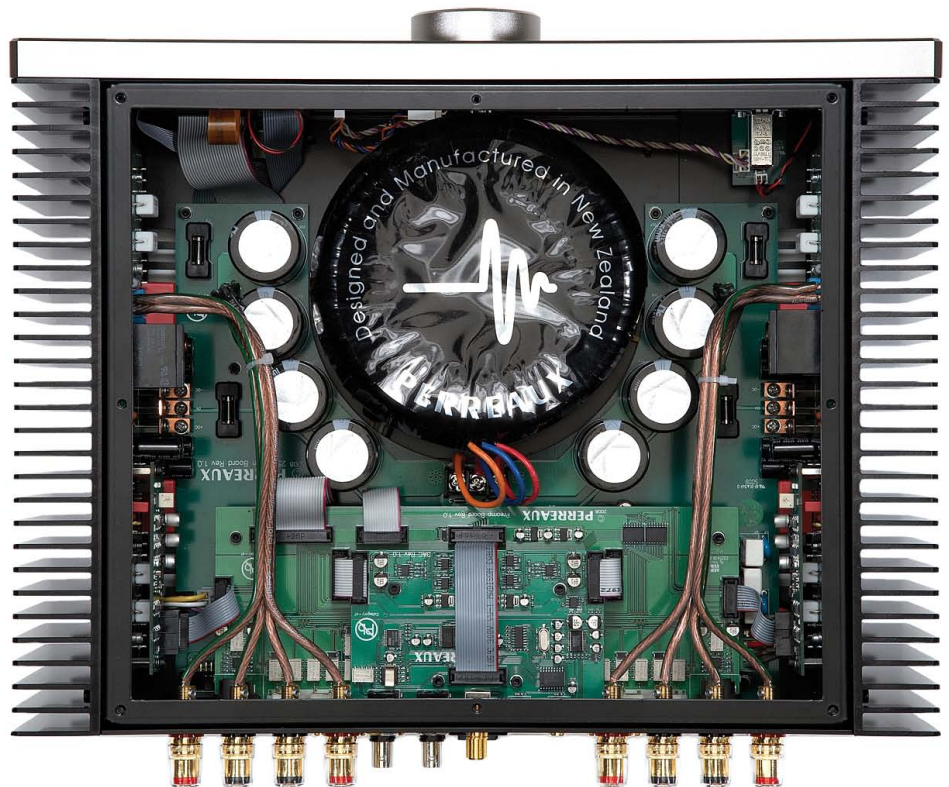
Listening Impressions

First listen to *éloquence 250i* was something of a disappointment to say the least. Everything went wrong, but I just could not understand why an amp in this price range did not perform better. But suddenly I was struck as if by lightning and realised that I should try to change the 230V phase! It is usual just to connect new equipment with the power cords already in the correct phase, but with the *éloquence 250i*, I had to turn the plug 180 degrees in the power distribution box, and the next moment I was in a completely different world!

I could almost compare the meeting with *éloquence 250i*, with the meeting with a new girlfriend. First, you get to know each other (find the correct 230V phase) and when love is a reality - all kinds of inputs are tested - preferably several times!

The *éloquence 250i* is an extremely powerful amplifier, which can both be heard in reality and read in the specifications. It has extreme control over the entire frequency range from the deepest bass and the whole way up there the audible range ends. It is experienced in almost explosive dynamics. There is really a huge punch here! And this is regardless of music genre. Even recordings that suffer from compression will benefit from this dynamic potential. There is a special force in this amplifier, which will bring almost every piece of music to life again!

I started out by connecting my CD player using both balanced and unbalanced connectors. I found a very small





tendency in favour of the balanced input. The sound stage was a little more airy and separated. By comparison the soundstage via the unbalanced input was narrower and without quite the same separation between the performers. So I continued listening through the balanced inputs.

I also listening to the DAC, RIAA, USB, and finally the éloquence 250i was used as a separate power stage. But I will get back to this later in the review.

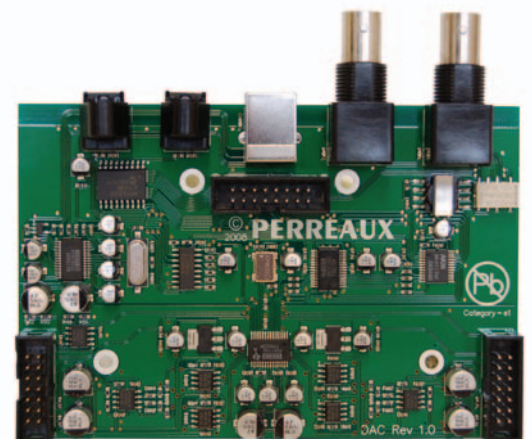
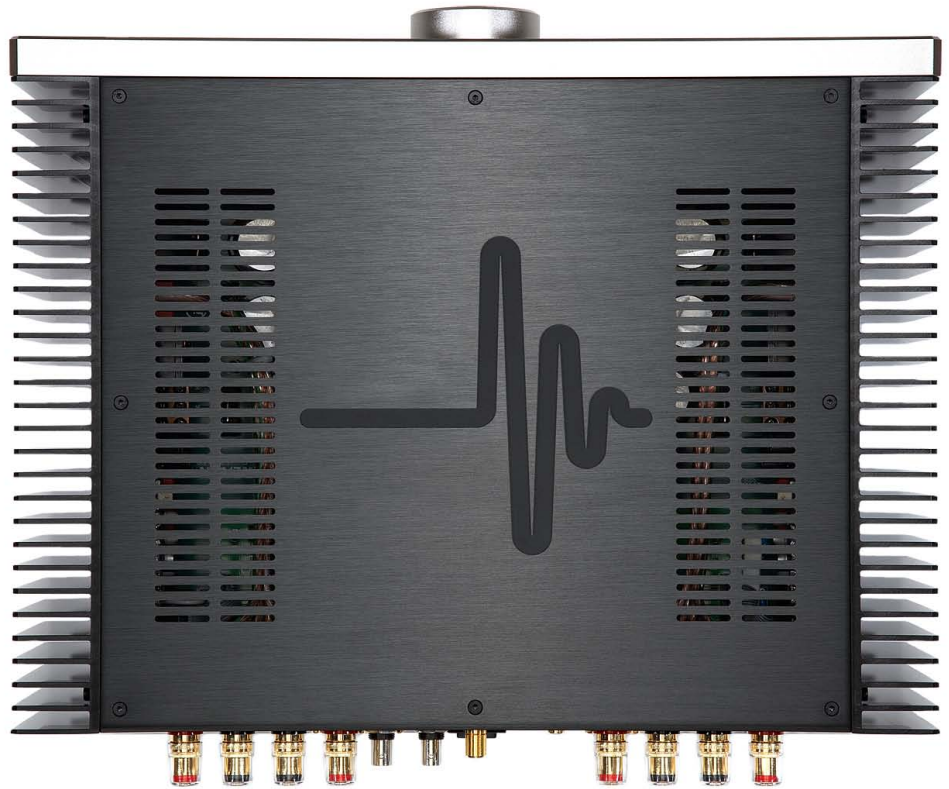
Through the balanced input, bass reproduction was dry, super-tight and well defined. This means that some listeners might miss a little warmth, but with my own speakers, it was a perfect match. They were controlled tight, and were not allowed to hum for themselves, which they have a tendency to do.

Midrange and treble were also super accurate and well controlled. However, it lacked a little air and extension in the treble and the midrange had a little harsh tendency with demanding material. Some might think that this gives the impression of a cool and disciplined amplifier and I almost agree. However when you have lived with éloquence 250i for some time, it presents a very clean and accurate reproduction over the entire frequency range.

You get a great feeling of space and the performers in The Magic Flute can be positioned very precisely in the soundstage. It was incredibly easy to follow them around on stage, even when they turned toward and away from the microphone. This is not something I experience often, and thus helps to emphasize the control the éloquence 250i demonstrates! At the same time there was a clear rush from the theatre, which I am accustomed to from my own setup.

The perspective is more focused than I'm used to, and I missed a little more width and depth of soundstage. The detail is right on the bull's eye. Nothing is held back, which is very evident with the interpretation of Bach's Cello suites of Pierre Fournier. All the small sounds of fingers wandering are audible. I missed however some warmth and body from the large wooden box of the cello. Here the control was just a bit too much of a good thing?

As I said earlier, all inputs were tested, and for this review the éloquence 250i was supplied with both DAC and RIAA plug-in cards. The DAC was tested using both the SPDIF and USB inputs. The sound via the built-in DAC was very similar sound from the Lyngdorf through the balanced inputs. However, I found a slight tendency that the signal through the balanced inputs was slightly better resolved and that there was more clarity in the sound stage. Little things which can only be observed by direct comparison.





It is possible to change the sampling frequency of the DAC, but I must honestly admit that the difference was not audible. But funny enough, there were noticeable difference when I switched the sampling frequency on the Lyngdorf?! From OK to very good – and from very good towards too much of a good thing. With a USB signal from my PC the very best solution was sound again very similar to the best I had previously experienced. The sound quality through the USB and PC seem to be in between the sound from SPDIF and the balanced analogue inputs. But the differences were so small that it might as well be imagination.

On I went with the RIAA stage, which showed the same tendency as the DAC. Here I missed the ultimate solution, which was especially evident on Pink Floyd's "Wish you were here". Voices of Gilmour and Waters were not separated quite as clearly as I am used to through the RIAA of the Bellini. At the White Stripes "Elephant" I also missed better definition of space, but again it was only just audible.

Apart from some slight audible hum, it is otherwise a very clean and a nice sound, with lots of drive and dynamics from my vinyl records. However, you will also get a little extra warmth in the deepest bass, which is surprising when you consider the control éloquence 250i otherwise exhibit.

Finally I wanted to review the éloquence 250i as separate power amplifier. I do not know if it was a premonition or it was sheer experience that told me to do so. But it was certainly here that I got a grand experience. It was a match that was sent from heaven.

It is clearly the power amplifier section that is the éloquence 250i's main strength - the preamplifier in éloquence 250i does not quite live up to its power stage. It was as a separate power amplifier I witnessed my own setup surpassed by the éloquence 250i. There was simply a "drive" and a dynamic that I almost did not believe my own ears.

The sound was very analogue, and all previous reservations on the midrange and treble disappeared. There was simply a transparency to a degree which reminded me of the time I had the pleasure of the Audio Research Ref 110 power amplifier. However, the éloquence 250i has much better control in the bass! I must admit that my own power amplifiers are completely surpassed in this discipline.

Overall impressions

Although we started out a little unusually, the Perreaux éloquence 250i managed to deliver a powerful presentation. It is a strong power amplifier with good control over all facets of music. Some might find it a little too direct and clean, but this is simply an amplifier that reproduces what it receives without making it up. Details are all there, although not presenting sound stage as large as the other amplifiers in its class.

Talking about design and build, everything is solidly made and assembled in the best way. At the same time the built-in menu offers as many customization options that you can easily spend several days to get them all checked off.

The power amplifier section in the éloquence 250i was what impressed me most. Should Perreaux make a separate power amplifier from this amp, my own power amplifiers can well start looking for a new home. But the preamplifier section in the éloquence 250i can not quite keep up with the power amp section, or my own Bellini. But this compromise is (unfortunately!) very normal for integrated amplifiers, even the expensive kind.

I will still give éloquence Perreaux 250i a good recommendation; are you missing an amplifier that can tame your woofers, then look no further. It's right here!

I could almost compare the meeting with éloquence 250i, with the meeting with a new girlfriend. First, you get to know each other (find the correct 230V phase) and when love is a reality - all kinds of inputs are tested - preferably several times!

"There's no substitute for cubic-inches"



Specifications

Class A/B integrated amplifier

Output: 2 x 360W into 8 ohms, 2 x 500 W into 4 ohms.

Damping factor: 800 at 1KHz 250W 8 ohms.

Frequency range: 20 – 20,000Hz @ 0.15 dB / 5 - 60,000Hz @ 0.5 dB.

DAC: 32, 44.1, 48, 88.2, 96, 176.4, 192 kHz (SPDIF), 32, 44.1, 48KHz (USB).

Phono: 47k/40dB/22pF(MM) & 100/60dB (MC), 20 -20,000KHz /+ - 0,5 dB

Dimensions: 42.5 x 15 x 34.5 cm (W x H x D).

Weight: 25 kg.

Price: 250i Kr 51.500 (optional DAC+5495 / optional MM/MC phono +3495)

Importer

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Reference equipment

CD player: Lyngdorf CD-1, Holfi Stabilizer,

Turntable: Michell GyroDec SE, Rega RB300/Incognito, London Decca Jubilee

Preamplifier: Audio Analogue Bellini

Power amplifiers: Vincent SP-995

Speakers: Xavian XN360

Cables: Vincent XLR, Silver Sonic AirMatrix RCA & Q10

Mains filter: Brinck Br 507

Listening Room

Listening room is rectangular, measuring just under 20 M2. Speakers positioned across the room with a half meter to the back wall and 1 meter to the side walls. Loudspeakers and listening position represents an isosceles triangle, with 500mm on each side. The wall behind the speakers and listening position is tempered using THX-approved panels.