



PERREAUX

product profile

Eloquence 250i Integrated Amplifier

Wise men say that a picture is worth a thousand words, but sometimes images don't even begin to do justice to the items they depict. So it was with the Perreaux Eloquence 250i integrated amplifier; the press images were nothing more than hazy facsimiles of the real thing.

If I'd eaten more Weetbix as a kid, I might have been able to heft our exquisite review sample around and lovingly gaze at it from every angle but, at around 25kg, it went straight into my rack. The extra-thick titanium grey faceplate, embossed black chassis and glowing blue display make for a striking look. A glance through the vents on the top shows that the layout is as neat as a textbook diagram.

The "Booting" message that pops up when you turn on the amp is a subtle hint that the microprocessor sophistication of our reference Perreaux Radiance 200i integrated is still something Perreaux is keen on. It's been taken to new heights with the 250i and the menu system allows for customisation of everything from display brightness to the gain levels of the phono stage; it would take much more space than I have to detail all the choices. Along with all that user control and a bank of inputs, there's home theatre and smart home integration as well as two optional modules: an MC/MM phono stage and an upsampling coax/Toslink/USB-capable DAC.

The 250i is billed as the world's most powerful Class A/B integrated amplifier and, with the Musical Fidelity KW550 out of production, the Perreaux is right up there. There are 350 Watts available into eight Ohms before clipping and 1000 into two ohms, so it's not a wilting little petal. If you're expecting a sledgehammers-and-iron-gloves effect, there's plenty of that, but the Perreaux also has a gossamer delicacy to its sound.

After a vigorous run-in process (played loud until the heat sinks cooked and then left blasting away day and night for a

week) the 250i proved an excellent match for my Theophany M5 floorstanders, and the combination highlighted the shades and textures of the music. Brushes lightly stroked on drum skins, the fragility of female vocalists or the decay of an acoustic blues guitar vanishing into the background were all rendered with a finesse that wouldn't be out of place coming from the most intricate of handmade boutique valve amps.

On the other hand, crank that big volume knob to the right as if you hate it and the Perreaux bolts like a snake-bit stallion. The dynamics and sheer musical energy are awesome, and even though you won't use all that power into even moderately sensitive speakers, the headroom for musical peaks is great to have and the 250i won't really give a damn about the speaker load.

No matter what I listened to, from hard rock to blues and jazz, even easy listening and electronica, whether on CD, vinyl or computer, the 250i was up to the task. It looks fabulous, is flexible, expandable and most importantly it's insistently musical and sounds even better than it looks. Despite being quite well thought out the plastic remote is a bit of a disappointment, but besides that, I can't think of any weaknesses, except perhaps that the more affordable Eloquence 150i model should have more than enough grunt for the vast majority of punters.

A world-class tour de force from a Kiwi company that should push the brand to new heights. ■ **BRETT GIDEON**

WHAT THEY SAID

"The 250i is pretty close to my dream amp. I don't really like the plastic remote or the display, but the sound is a perfect match for the Theophanies: it brings out that effortless deep bass and crystal-clear tops with no sign of 'thinning' anywhere. Quite depressing, really, considering the state of my finances" - **A certain Tone editor who borrowed the 250i**

EXTRA VALUE

Perreaux has been making phono stages, headphone amps and DACs for a long time and these aspects of the 250i proved to be standout performers. The headphone output is right up there with my Perreaux Silhouette series amp, and the phono stage made my low-output MC cartridge quite happy. The DAC is particularly relevant for owners of music streamers and servers, which often benefit from an external converter. I spent a fair amount of time enjoying music played from the files on my laptop, which interfaced seamlessly with the USB input every time. The 250i embodies the modern definition of an integrated amp.

TECH SPECS

AUDIO OUTPUTS: 1 pair balanced, 1 pair RCA, 6.35mm jack, 2 pairs speaker binding posts per channel

AUDIO INPUTS: 1 pair balanced, 4 pairs RCA, 3.5mm minijack

MISC: 3.5mm trigger in and out, 3.5mm external IR input, RS232 jack

POWER OUTPUT: 250W into 8 Ohms (360 peak)

500W into 4 Ohms (530 peak)

DAMPING FACTOR: 800

DIMENSIONS: 426 x 149 x 344mm (W/H/D)

WEIGHT: 25kg

FINISHES: Black with grey faceplate

DAC MODULE

INPUTS: 2 x coax, 2 x optical, 1 x USB

SAMPLE RATES: Up to 192kHz

PHONO MODULE

MM GAIN: 40dB

MC GAIN: 60dB

MM IMPEDANCE: 47k Ω

MC IMPEDANCE: 100 Ω

CONTACT:

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