

AMPLE GUTS

At the price point that the R200i comes, one needs sheer guts to put out sound that dares to be different. And Perreux has done just that!

As the market sees a torrential inflow of multichannel amplifiers, the fate of traditional two-channel amplifiers is steadily on the decline. Today, it's only the smaller players with a dedicated market share that are incorporating the latest research into two-channel amps. New Zealand's Perreux (pronounced as 'perrow') is one such small-scale operation. The simple-looking R200i stereo amplifier on review here has a lot to offer, including features that are generally unheard of in two-channel amplifiers. This one's sure to raise the eyebrows of many readers!

Features

I was not very impressed when I opened the colourful box in which the amplifier was delivered, I had expected to find a mammoth box weighing at least 50kgs - not this small, slim one that barely touches 20kgs! What's all that money paid for? An acrylic top? This cannot be high-end equipment!

Fortunately, all was answered when I referred to the almost 100-page user's manual, which was more like educational material. The amp has a whopping 200 watts per channel power at 8 ohms, which ramps up to 360 watts per channel at 4 ohms. This lightweight wonder just goes to prove that the true weight in high-end components needn't actually weigh a ton! The amplifier is a true dual mono stage with two sets of power supplies, one for each channel. The display

power is directly derived from the transformer taps, leaving no room for sonic degradation when the display is on.

Specifications

Output Power: (continuous, per channel)
200WRMS into 8Ω/360WRMS into 4Ω
Frequency Response: 10Hz-35kHz
+0.5dB
THD: typically 0.003%, 1kHz into 8Ω;
typically 0.004%, 1 kHz into 4Ω
Smoothing Capacitance: 80,000uF
(40,000uF per channel)
Driver Stage: Class A
Output Stage: Class A/AB

And, there's more! The amp is microprocessor controlled, something that is generally found only in AV receivers. You can programme the power-on volume level, as well as lock the maximum operable volume. The amp can show the heat sink temperature for the left and right channels separately; but please don't ask me what the function of this feature is! In case of amp failure, it displays a code on the display panel to indicate the possible problem, which can be deciphered by referring to the manual.

The R200i can be used as a power amp through whichever input you wish, though there is one default input reserved for it. This makes it very easy to incorporate the amp in a home-theatre set-up. It also has a RS-232 smart interface for easy integration into home automation systems. 12V trigger at the rear





panel can trigger on/off any associated component that has a trigger input. The speaker terminals are of the high quality WBT type connectors; you can connect two pairs of speakers to this amp.

There are just six small, touch-panel buttons surrounding the egg-shaped display window, and the amp can be fully operated through them. Unfortunately, as the amp has many advanced and menu driven features, operation can get a bit tedious at times.

Remote Control

The amp comes with a full function, Radio Frequency (RF) remote, instead of the usual Infra Red (M) type. This means that one needn't necessarily point the remote at the equipment while being used; RF waves can travel through walls and doors.

Performance

If I were to point out one outstanding characteristic in the R200i, it would be transparency. As soon as the amp played the first note, the veil that clogged the view to the clear soundstage was shredded to pieces. The speakers virtually disappeared and the room filled with musical instruments that seemed to be floating in thin air, almost out of nowhere. This is true imaging: if blindfolded, one shouldn't be able to locate the speakers. My experience



with the tonality was a bit strange. Despite being slightly bright when compared to other high-end products, the highs here had no trace of harshness. Neither did the various sounds bear the usual luminous glare or shimmer on its outlines. In fact, there was quite a dark recess between the different instruments.

If you're looking for a new sound and are ready to be adventurous with this kind of money, the Perreaux

R200i can be an option for you. It doesn't have the usual creamy, smooth and warm sound that other amps at this price produce; it is bright and exciting, has a rare degree of transparency, and packs in punch and authority that can turn even the sloppiest speaker into Bruce Lee.

I was also surprised at the sheer speed and dynamism that the amp displayed in the bass region. Referring to the manual, I found that the damping factor of the amp is around 2000 (it is usually around a few hundred, and often below 500, in most other amps). The high damping factor indicates that the amp controls the speaker (especially the woofer) excursion very tightly. This ensures that the speaker doesn't become loose after it has made a forward movement, as it brings it back in position immediately, ready to execute the next whack. Thus, when the R200i is playing, you can hear more of the amp and less of speaker sloppiness.

Conclusion

The Perreaux R200i is by all means a fine, bold, high-class amplifier. One can't help but respect a brand that it is ready to experiment at such a price bracket. It's not just the look and sound, but also the concept and build of the R200i that's quite daring for mainstream, high-end standards. But, being a product in this particular range, it does face the danger of failing into the league of 'diminishing returns'. Undoubtedly, there are significant improvements that have come with the price. You'll just have to decide if it's worth it.

MEHUL MEPANI



The Perreaux Company was founded in 1974 by Peter Perreaux. After years of building amplifiers (mainly valves) as a hobby for his friends and acquaintances, he began working as an electronics technician for a local hi-fi company. When there, the manager of the company persuaded Peter to go into the amplifier manufacturing business. Along with brother Keith and a friend, the Perreaux Company was formed with an initial \$1,000.

In early 1976, Perreaux produced New Zealand's first locally made PA system to be taken on the road (by a then popular NZ rock band, Ragnarok). The system weighed about 3 tonnes. Capable of 900 watts RMS mono, it had the power to generate mini earthquakes at many well-built venues.

