



PERREAUX 200iP INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

“Super” integrated amplifiers such as the Perreaux 200iP seem to be very much in vogue at the moment. Historically, integrated amplifiers were found almost exclusively in starter to mid-level hi-fi systems; if you had a high-end system you were almost certainly operating a separate pre- and power-amplifier. However, the last few years have seen the introduction of a number of "serious" integrated amps (serious in terms of size, sound quality and cost), from specialist manufacturers such as Musical Fidelity, Krell, Plinius, Linn, Conrad Johnson, Accuphase and Mark Levinson.

Add to that list the Perreaux 200iP. It's a substantial and powerful design, measuring 88 x 483 x 460mm and delivering 200 watts into 8 Ohms. Of particular note is that depth measurement; at 460mm deep the Perreaux simply will not fit into many standard-sized equipment racks.

Closer inspection of the specifications reveals that the 200iP is in fact a pre-amp and power-amp rolled into one case. It features fully independent pre-amp or power-amp functionality, selectable by flicking a small toggle switch on the rear panel to "separate". Alternatively the toggle switch can be set to "couple", whereby the pre- and power-amp sections are connected together and the Perreaux operates as a standard integrated amp.

If the Plinius gear's front panels make a particular kind of visual statement, then the 200iP's aesthetics are another matter entirely. With its glowing red display and rough-hewn, matt black finish, the Perreaux looks as though it could have been forged in the heart of a volcano. The supplied remote control, on the other hand, appears to belong with a child's toy - looking and feeling as plastic as the amp is solid. Functionally speaking, however, it does all that's required (volume adjust, source select, muting) although its design as a universal remote (for the entire Perreaux range) makes for some rather convoluted command sequences.

VERDICT

Perreaux 200iP

Pros: Outstanding sound for the money and excellent build quality

Cons: Quirky ergonomics, plasticky remote, looks a matter of taste

Build	★★★★☆
Sound	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★



Listening

The bottom-end of the 200iP is unbelievably extended, the 200-watt powerhouse applying a tightly controlled, vice-like grip to low frequencies. Music is delivered with such effortless ease that you just want to keep cranking up the volume so you can enjoy more of the music. As the volume is raised the Perreaux remains unflappable, never straining or gasping for breath.

Much like the Plinius pairing, the Perreaux offered outstanding imaging characteristics. Both left-to-right and front-to-back imaging were superb - a giant sound stage enticing the listener deep into the mix. The ability to create a believable image that hangs in space is a rare commodity in hi-fi, but the Perreaux (and the Plinius) have this ability in spades. The Perreaux was perhaps a little relaxed and ever so slightly soft-sounding at the top end, but given the huge price difference, the performance gap between the two was smaller than you might imagine. Quite simply, the Perreaux 200iP is a stone-cold audiophile bargain.

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