

Wes Phillips comments on the Perreaux Radiance R200i at the New York Home Entertainment 2002 audio expo

Perreaux's new Radiance R200i, a 200Wpc integrated, is another product like that. I think it looks stunning: The sample at the show had a black chrome faceplate and a glossy black acrylic top plate. The front panel is bereft of all controls; all you see are a centrally located oval display and a subdued "Perreaux" cast into the lower left of the panel. (Actually, there *are* very tiny little touchpad buttons set into the display for vital functions, but you've really got to look for 'em.)

This supremely uncluttered look is made possible by the R200i's software-driven microprocessor, which also gives the user an immense amount of functional flexibility. User settings are stored in non-volatile EPROM and there are lots of choices. You can assign input labels, set the balance for each input, choose a preferred start-up volume, set maximum volume, choose from three display brightness levels, adjust display-timeout and energy-saver modes, and choose which input the unit will default to.

In addition, Perreaux used the microprocessor in a variety of ways I've never encountered before.

Thermal monitoring, for instance. Both left and right heatsink temperature are individually monitored and are displayed in real time in the LED window (in centigrade, of course). If the amp goes into thermal protection or overload protection, the display says so. That protection is intelligently controlled, too. The amp will pass signal again when the heatsinks cool down (if it's a thermal failure). If the amp has gone into overload protection, it will automatically ramp down and continue to monitor itself as it ramps back up to its original output in 5dB increments. If it fails again, it resets itself to its last safe setting.

The microprocessor even controls the binding posts. Want to drive two pairs of speakers? No problem, just pick the proper setting. Need to biwire your speakers? Again, choose the option and the circuit will adjust to it.

This all makes so much sense I can't believe no one has done it before! There's so much processing power available on chips now, it seems ridiculous to limit their use to controlling displays and switching signal paths - if we're going to use 'em, let's really *use* 'em.

And for those of you who are, quite rightly, concerned about all the AC garbage that LED displays and microprocessors produce, well, so is Perreaux. The control circuitry gets its juice from its own li'l multi-tap toroidal transformer (well, little relative to the honking big 'roids that power each channel). This eliminates any risk of noise contamination through the supply.

I could go on and on -- the R200i's RF controlled, so you can put it anywhere; it's built like a Greene & Greene outhouse (*much* more palatial than brick); it's stuffed with high-quality parts; and, let's not forget, it puts out a stiff 200Wpc! And the remote -- which Perreaux designed -- is fantastic! And... and... and...

Oh just wait for the full review, 'cause I have simply *got* to get my hands on one of these. Never mind comparing it to other integrations -- it's one of the coolest audio toys ever.



Obviously proud of their handiwork, Perreaux's managing director Martin van Rooyen and Daniel Lamborn (left and right respectively in photo above right), who did a lot of the design work on the R200i, were on hand to guide me through the intricacies of the design. I'd never met Marty before -- I've never made it to the antipodes and this was his first trip here -- but I felt an immediate affinity. If there's one quality that immediately wins me over, it's a kind of barely suppressed enthusiasm that borders on the boyish. Marty all but jumped from one foot to the other as he raced through a list of the R200i's features. *Ah*, I thought, *he's one of us*.

Poor guy -- seems happy though.