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## Sonic Satori: Perreaux Does the Job with Style...

MICHAEL MERCER

### Perreaux Audiant 80i integrated amplifier: \$2,995.00

Perreaux has been a respected line in the high-end audio industry for many years. The name achieved cult-like status in the '80s over here in the States, with a solid reputation for both musicality and durability. Their gear is designed and built in New Zealand, and quality control is something the company takes very seriously. What a foreign concept these days; building something and actually standing behind it for more than thirty days! When you purchase a Perreaux product you know you're going to have a decent support structure behind you, and that's the way it should be; especially when you decide to spend time and money on high-end audio equipment. Many Perreaux devotees who purchased their equipment many years ago still own it—a testament to the company's dedication to quality products (not to mention the strong resale value of their amplifiers and pre-amps).



Unfortunately (for us in the U.S., anyway), Perreaux has been focusing their efforts overseas for awhile now, and their distribution channel on this side of the pond has been scarce to say the least. Fortunately they have found a dedicated distributor in [Fidelis AV](#), and the press surrounding their latest Audiant 80i integrated amplifier has been overwhelmingly positive. In fact, the reviews have been so complimentary, I felt like I needed to take a stab at this ultra-modern looking piece of audio gear, so I reached out to Clinton Jensen, an engineer at Perreaux. Clinton is one of the most courteous and professional people I have ever dealt with in the high-end audio industry. (It's a niche filled with crazy characters that produce some of the world's greatest sounding audio products – but also with its fair share of snake oil salesman.) He's also into all sorts of music, not just the typical audiophile fair, so I was anxious to hear his latest creation. I'm happy to have made his acquaintance and sincerely hoped his gear would live up to its name.

Well, it gives me great pleasure to say: the Audiant 80i certainly lived up to the hype. I have to tip my hat to my friend and fellow audio reviewer, Neil Gader at [The Absolute Sound](#). He picked the perfect title for [his review](#) of the 80i. He called the unit "The Right Amp at the Right Time." That says it more succinctly than I ever could. Basically, an integrated amplifier is a receiver without the tuner section—a pre-amp and an amplifier in one chassis. Audiophiles consider integrated amplifiers for a number of reasons, price and space considerations being two of them: having separate boxes for your amp and pre-amp raises the footprint as well as the cost. On the design front, the Audiant has beautifully clean, modern styling. The brushed aluminum and black box looks like something that could be at home on the U.S.S. Enterprise, or the Guggenheim Museum. Its front plate sports a large volume knob (centered on the chassis) and a black glass touch panel, which spans across the front end of the unit. This is how you select your sources, by touching the corresponding labels (phono, disc, aux, etc.). This is a nice touch (no pun intended).



The unit has all the inputs you need in order to keep up with today's constantly evolving media delivery systems. You get a full phono-stage (so if you have a turntable, no need for a phono pre-amplifier, just plug and play), a USB input for your computer or music server, digital COAX and multiple optical inputs (perhaps for your new smart TV or Blu Ray player), as well as analog inputs. Have an old tuner with a sound you just can't live without? No problem, plug it into the Audiant 80i and you're off and running. It even comes complete with pre-amp outputs in case you have a beefier power amp you'd like to use in order to drive your older, perhaps less efficient, loudspeakers. Perreaux pulled out all the stops for the design of the 80i, and the result is a component that is surprisingly future-ready. I hate the phrase "future-proof". How the hell can you ever design electronics that will never turn obsolete? The answer is, you can't — especially at the

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rate in which the world of consumer electronics is constantly changing. Investing in the 80i, however, provides you with the ability to play all your current sources, and even increase the performances of some of those sources. Take the digital output of your satellite receiver for example: connect the box to the Audiant and experience greater clarity in the audio of your favorite television programs.

Enough with the look and feel of the unit, what about the sound? This thing packs a punch that would surprise even the most discriminating listener (though you may expect that in a unit that weighs a fair amount). The Audiant's sound is authoritative and clear. It's dynamic and airy, with resolution that allows you to hear deeply into the music. This helps the listener get lost in the sound, and creates an enveloping soundstage that helps to paint a holographic image of the recorded event (providing the source is of decent quality of course — crap in, crap out remember). The price tag may sound a little steep, but believe me: you can find products in hi-fi that cost a hell of a lot more that deliver a whole lot less. If you're looking for a high-quality building block for a stereo system at home, and your taste has outgrown the big box stores, the Perreaux Audiant 80i is not only a great choice for today, but this thing will keep you listening for many years to come. I highly recommend this product, and given the fact that I've been using the same reference amplifier for over a decade (and have tried many others) I can safely say I doubt you'd be disappointed. This component represents what is so great about high end audio: great sound as the result of great engineering... And the sheer love of music.



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