

Perreaux 200iX Integrated Amplifier Review

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Paul Sechi auditions this premium-priced, New Zealand-made integrated amplifier...

PERREAUX

200iX INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

AUD \$8,995 RRP



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Peter Perreaux started his company back in 1974, and his products soon generated cult status amongst audiophiles. He began with pure Class A power amplifiers and then branched out into preamplifiers and loudspeakers. A couple of changes of ownership later, and nearly fifty years on, the company is owned and run by Edwin Nieman. He continues to make this range of highly respected electronics.

The 200iX integrated that you see here has panache. It's the middle child in Perreaux's range, above the 80i and below the 300iX and in Australia, it retails for \$8,995. Our review sample is baked in a striking orange hue called Sunburst; it looks too beautiful to be an amplifier. Available in any Dulux colour you like, custom colouring a component is a great way to stamp an aesthetic signature. Many audiophiles fuss over loudspeaker finish and moan about formulaic finishes like black, gold or silver, but with this, you have no excuse.



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It is a svelte-looking amplifier with rounded front and rear fascia plates that carry through the side-mounted heatsinks. The 200iX is full width but not that deep. At 19kg, it's front end-heavy due to the large toroidal transformer sitting behind the front fascia. The front panel design is minimalist - a headphone jack, a large rotary 'dial', five small buttons and a good-sized OLED display - that's it! The rotary dial is versatile flipping between volume, selector and controller. The provided 'generic' remote functioned well but was underwhelming; the real 200iX remote is in design, we're told.

The rear panel has more RCA and Neutrik connectors than you can count. The amp boasts two balanced inputs, four unbalanced inputs plus MM/MC phono inputs. There's a stub antenna to control the amplifier via Bluetooth, and digital inputs for the built-in DAC. A single pair of speaker binding posts is fitted. Smart device users will be impressed with Perreaux's App available from Google and Apple stores. The provided PDF user manual is comprehensive.



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The amplifier marries old and new. The Class A headphone circuit is an old Perreaux design that's been reinvigorated and beautifully built with surface mount components. In fact, the entire amplifier is very well put together. The front panel high-resolution display uses a block type font that harks back to nineteen-eighties video games – it's effective but not what I expected. Physically the amplifier is compact, measuring 426x100x345mm.

Claimed power output is 200W RMS into 8 ohms; this comes from MOSFET power devices which are said to run in pure Class A at up to 10 watts, and Class AB thereafter. The built-in ESS Sabre DAC has all the capability you should ever want. There are S/PDIF coaxial and optical inputs as well as USB and AES EBU XLR terminations. It will run up to 24-bit, 192kHz on S/PDIF and up to 32-bit, 384kHz PCM or DSD256 via the USB input.



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Perreux has included many tailored physical and electronic optimisation options for the discerning buyer. Mechanically, the unit can be changed from the factory-installed four isolation points to three. Electronically, you can tailor each input name (or delete if not using), set gain parameters, or configure a low impedance output mode to mate to electrostatic speakers. The rear panel RS-232 comms port allows the amplifier to be controlled via several Smart Home standards, including Control4, AMX and Crestron. To get through all the settings and options would take an unfamiliar person a week, so heed the advice of your hi-fi dealer and ask them to set it up for you before you walk out the door with one.

For this review, my reference system comprised a Primare CD player and Bluesound Vault 2i streamer front ends, Primare i30 integrated and Serhan Swift Mu.2 and ELAC BS283 loudspeakers. Analogue cables were Tributaries Series 8 with Audioquest digital/optical cables. A Rega P3 turntable and a pair of Ultimate Ears IEM headphones completed the list.



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THE LISTENING

The Perreux 200iX is a fast, lively and neutral-sounding amplifier. It felt quieter than my Primare, with every note springing into life and then tailing away into darkness with next-to no overhang. It's tonally open and even, with no obvious colouration added to sweeten the musical pill. It also boasts excellent soundstage depth and layering. It's a class musical act, that's for sure.

This amplifier's sheer brio and zest for life was obvious when spinning up **Eric Bibb's *Come Back Baby***. This track has an unexpectedly live feel for a studio album, and the 200iX really shone here. The guitar work flew out at great pace, with plenty of space around it and striking silences between the notes. I appreciated the music and vocals much more than usual.



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The Perreaux conjures up a very convincing recorded acoustic. The soundstage was solid, expansive and well defined. It was as if Eric Bibb was playing just a few metres in front of me. **Elbow's** *Mirrorball* also came over as really capacious; I don't think I have heard Guy Garvey's voice as open and clear on my system before. The orchestral arrangement positively swooned across the soundstage in front of me, and then disappeared into the vast acoustic.

Within this, instruments were very well defined. Even more so with **Beck's** *Round the Bend*, especially when played via the analogue input. I experienced excellent separation of instruments and vocals; on a track where some hi-fi separates can make vocals and instruments seem muddy, the Perreaux picked it apart with precision. It conveyed an accurate soundstage and delivered the multi-layered instrumental work within it in a clear and concise way. Although tonally leaner than my Primare, the overall presentation seemed more enjoyable.



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As you would expect, the Perreaux sounded a little sweeter via its MM phono input compared to CD via an analogue line level in. For example, **Robert Cray's** *Nothin' But A Woman* delivered a satisfyingly smooth sound with a taut yet well-weighted bass. More importantly, it was fast and musically engaging enough to get my foot tapping all the way through this track.

Moving to the dedicated headphone circuit, I dialled up a recent favourite, *Domino* by *Nicole Atkins*. The sound was rich and inviting with excellent detail; the creaking sounds at the start of the recording were so vivid that they seemed 'just there', and the singer's vocals came over as being raw with emotion. I fed the 200iX's optical input from my Bluesound streamer to get a better sense of what it could do, and enjoyed this amplifier's top-end balance with *Luka Bloom's Delirious*. It came over as very well defined, but upper-range vocals and guitar work never got forward or shouty. In comparison, my reference Primare i30 seemed a little slow and soft – the 200iX was leaner and faster across all musical genres.



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THE VERDICT



(https://www.stereonet.com/uk/images/uploads/StereoNET_Applause_Award_2021.png) Perreaux's 200iX is an excellent, premium-priced integrated amplifier – one that is a real headache for its price rivals. It presents a very swish face to the world, yet its styling isn't bland, and the build quality is superb. I found a few little niggles; the app failed once or twice on me, but a reload fixed this, and it could do with a classier remote control – which we know is coming. Yet there are so many good points, not least the ability to choose the colour to suit your taste.

What really matters is its sound quality, and here it shines. Although tonally clean, it never comes across as clinical and is superb in the time domain. Every speaker I tried with it sang beautifully and presented no problems for the amp in terms of driving them. It's a one-stop amplification shop, then. So if you're in the market for a serious integrated, you'd be foolish to overlook this. The 200iX is a strong statement of Perreaux's intent.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT PERREAUX
([HTTPS://WWW.STERONE.COM/AU/BRANDS/PERREAUX/](https://www.stereonet.com/au/brands/perreaux/))

GALLERY



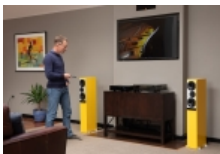
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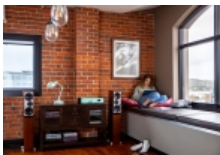
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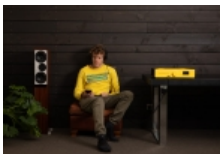
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PAUL SECHI
([HTTPS://WWW.STERONET.COM/AU/ASSOCIATED-POSTS/46443](https://www.stereonet.com/au/associated-posts/46443))

Paul is a music appreciation fan of both live and produced music from diverse genres and cultures. Paul was interested in audio at school, did a thesis in acoustics and by day works as a technology strategist including smart environment standards and integration.

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