

Review: Perreaux 300iX



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The Hawke's Bay wine region in New Zealand's picturesque North Island is known for its exquisite expressions of the Syrah grape, rivalling the best that the northern hemisphere has to offer. In much the same fashion, the Hi-Fi company Perreaux, originating from Napier, Hawke's Bay, is known for its exquisite amplifiers, rivalling the best that the northern hemisphere has to offer.



Since its inception in 1974, Perreaux quickly grew a name for itself by designing the amplifier equivalent of muscle cars, marrying power and elegance in indestructible gunmetal rigs. This isn't hyperbole – marketing stunts saw Perreaux amps run over, thrown from trucks, dropped from loading docks, and lugged back into showrooms remaining fully operational. The warm MOSFET transistors combined with the sheer amounts of power on offer found Perreaux power amplifiers at work in roaring bar systems just as often as they were in muscular home setups.

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Perreaux's latest offering in their range of integrated amplifiers is the 300iX, a complete Hi-Fi solution to fit any setup imaginable. A far cry from the Lego brick designs of old, this elegant audiophile amp is housed in a new look, sleek metal chassis, with an uncluttered control panel that is agreeably minimalist.

What isn't quite as minimalist is the dizzying rainbow of colours the unit is available in: if you've just painted everything in your studio canary yellow and are worried your new amplifier might stand out – fear not, Perreaux have your back. With so many finishes on offer there really is something for everyone here (with Racing Green being a favourite of the Mixdown office). All units are hand-painted to your exact specification, glossy or matte, which is another classy touch.

In the hand, the 300iX is indeed a hefty unit, taking up about as much space as two briefcases stacked atop one another, and weighing in at around 30kg, but at no point does this bulk feel unnecessary or just for show. One listen to the 300iX's incredibly high quality output, coupled with its endlessly clean headroom and distortion properties, and it's obvious that no corner has been cut in regards to sourcing the finest quality components and circuitry for this release. The heavy-gauge tinned copper cabling found on Perreaux's own proprietary toroidal power transformer being just one example of the kind of the premium components on display under the hood.

The 300iX has an extensive list of audio inputs, taking balanced XLR analog, Power Amp RCA analog, USB, digital XLR, two optical inputs, two coaxial inputs, five unbalanced RCA inputs. The phono inputs cater directly to vinyl aficionados with the preamp stage suitable for both moving magnet and moving coil cartridges. For output, you can choose between speaker wire output (with two pairs of binding posts should you choose to bi-wire your speakers), unbalanced RCA at both line and preamp levels, and a 6.25mm headphone out with a dedicated class A amplifier (which we will get into later). The 300iX also takes a quality Bluetooth stream input, for those with wireless proclivities. The amplifier comes with

a dedicated remote control (like all good Hi-Fi gear should!) but can also be controlled with Perreaux's very handy remote app with an Android or iPhone device.

On the face of the 300iX is an OLED display indicating the current input source, volume, and sample rate where applicable. Five buttons below let you control the amplifier's settings, which can also be controlled via the remote control or the Perreaux remote app.

The amplifier ramps volume changes gradually by default, such as when you hit the mute button or switch between input sources, giving you a kind few seconds of warning when switching to a very hot input source. You can change the speed at which this ramping occurs, or turn it off altogether, in the menu. The level that the mute button drops the amplifier to can also be changed, letting you turn it into more of a dim control if desired.

Perreaux's 300iX is their most powerful integrated amplifier on offer, delivering a huge 300+ watts into eight ohms. Contrary to the brawn, the total harmonic distortion is a minuscule 0.004 per cent at 1kHz into eight ohms. With this kind of power, the 300iX will handle even the most demanding passive monitors with finesse.

To test the kind of precision with which the amplifier handles dynamics and transients, I hooked up my trusty NS-10M monitors, notorious for their extreme recoil in the midrange, and spun up the most highly processed, aggressively transient music in existence, modern day K-Pop.

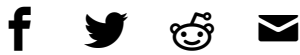
While hooking up NS-10s to a premium amplifier like this is akin to wearing runners with a suit, the 300iX drove them with ease, pumping out the glossy pop with incredible depth and accuracy. With 300 watts to work with, the NS-10s sounded immediate and crisp rather than harsh, a feat that few amplifiers can accomplish. Also of note is the quality of the DAC unit on the 300iX, bearing that instantly recognisable depth and precision that we tend to only find in converters of the rack mounted variety.

In no mood to cut corners, Perreaux has included a dedicated Class A headphone amp capable of driving headphones of impedances up to 600 ohms. The headphone amp, Perreaux's own SXH2 design, runs from a dedicated power supply, and is perfect for checking mix decisions on the fly in a studio context. Equally useful is the ability to connect devices directly to the 300iX, which is ideal for auditioning high quality reference tracks

with a minimum of fuss. These two features work in concert, making the 300iX an ideal ‘centre of operations’ for all your monitoring needs.

There has always been plenty of overlap between mix engineers and the audiophile world and this has been at the core of the Perreaux brand identity since their emergence in the ‘70s. The 300iX, with its dizzying array of outputs, integrated headphone amp, and high quality conversion/streaming capabilities, makes for a winning combination of classic audiophile amp design and modern functionality.

Head to Perreaux for more information. For local enquiries on Perreaux products, reach out to Sound and Music.



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