

Review: MOON 250i v2 integrated amplifier

by Simon Wilce



The MOON by Simaudio 250i integrated amplifier is one of their most successful models. And yet here we have a v2, though notably, coming a good decade after the current version was launched. It begs the age-old question “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”. That longevity says it all as there isn’t a great deal to update on an analogue classic like this. This v2 has not so much been updated as upgraded with the addition of a few modifications that edge the MOON 250i v2 towards the top of the crowded ‘entry-level’ integrated amplifier pile.

Design

This is the best value MOON by SimAudio integrated amplifier there is, it is pure analogue with no digital platform at all, and this is good. Very good. I’ve used ‘best value’ but ‘entry-level’ is also applicable here as this may be the first piece of Moon equipment you buy and once you are on the MOON road you may want to upgrade and hear even more inside the music. It is ‘best value’ because it benefits from all of Simaudio’s experience and expertise in the development of MOON products, that always reviewed well here at HF&MS.



The MOON 250i v2 is an upgrade on the 250i but it now has a 40dB gain MM phono stage within it offering an even more attractive entry to the analogue world. The v2 has additionally had an upgraded circuit design with next-generation semiconductors, and it has a new shield for the power supply, enabling the phono stage to be incorporated, presumably.

The MOON 250i v2 has 4-line level inputs at the rear plus the phono input and it still retains a 3.5mm input jack at the front for old iPods, portable players and the like. There is a preamplifier RCA output available at the rear as well. On the front fascia, there is all the input information you need for this and there is a 6.25mm headphone jack too, as well as a mute and speaker bypass function (for the headphones). The 250i V2 comes with their excellent ‘CRM-3’ remote control. Additionally, the unit comes with SIMLink control so that the V2 can talk to other SimAudio products with functions like standby, etc.

In high-level terms the MOON 250i v2 claims 50W/ch into 8 Ohms and a frequency response (full range) of 10 Hz – 100 kHz +0/-3 dB, the full specification is listed at the end of the review.

Quality

It's MOON so it has a solid build, it is a rigid chassis of several pieces beautifully screwed together. As a measure of build quality, all the six screws on the top panel are square to the rear panel and perfectly matched. There is a weight to the unit that gives you the confidence you're at the right level and it is a full-width piece. The dimensions are (width x height x depth): 42.9 x 8.9 x 36.6 cm (6.9 x 3.5 x 14.4 in) and the unit weighs 10kg (22 lbs).

Performance

Review Equipment

My preference would be to review this unit with the MOON 280D streaming DAC on the basis it would look amazing and would form a system going forward for years to come, just select a turntable and you're set.

However, I'm using a super clean streaming Chord Electronics 2Go/2Yu bridge mainly to an iFi Pro iDSD which is my preferred DAC at this time (I have only now stopped crying after the T+A DAC 200 left the building). Additionally, I'm using an Eversolo streaming DAC analogue output because it is here and it is fun, which is basically what it is all about. For phono stage testing I'm using my trusty old Rega RP3 that has an Elys2 MM cartridge.

I'm reviewing using Atlas Mavros loudspeaker cables (not GRUN) into a pair of isobaric Kudos Titan 505 loudspeakers, that were an Editor's Pick in April this year. I'm using Meze Audio 109 Pros for the headphone stage.



Physically

The unit is chunky but there is plenty of room at the rear for everything. The On/Off switch is reassuringly substantial at the rear and my Atlas power lead is tight fitting, but the housing itself is loose to isolate any mechanical vibration to/from the chassis (I'm familiar with this idea with my own Naim components).

Kudos Titan 505

Overall, the sound quality is very impressive indeed, the Titans have an isobaric design, so I'm used to plenty of bass response with my Moor power amplifier. There's plenty of bass here too with the likes of Billie Eilish's *Lo Vas A Olvidar* (Tidal MQA 24 bit 48kHz) and Arooj Aftab's *Last Night* (Tidal MQA 24 bit 48kHz) ably shaking my rib cage from a distance of 3m at only moderate volume.

At the same moment, there is enough punch and bass with *Glory* (Tidal FLAC 16-bit, 44.1kHz) by Sault to get me nodding like a chicken, which is always a good feeling. As often as not I will end up listening to Miles Kane's *Don't Forget Who You Are* (Tidal FLAC 16-bit, 44.1kHz) for its timing and pace as well as the punch that I already know is there by now.

Having recently returned a T+A PA 2000 R integrated amplifier (at least twice the price) I am clear in my mind this MOON 250i v2 offers a sharp but satisfying difference to the more analytical T+A electronics. There is, however, a very well-organised and extensive soundstage here that is driving the Titans in a very positive way.

Since I'm used to detail and resolution in these loudspeakers it is time to dial in Amos Lee's beautiful self-titled debut album that is still a winner at every track. If there is a more beautiful album than this, I'd like to hear it. Speaking of which, Nils Frahm's *FIZZING* piano-led album *Solo* (Tidal FLAC 16-bit, 44.1kHz) reveals beautiful pianos here, particularly in the track *Some* and the opening track *Ode*.



Meze Audio 109 Pro

Insert the headphones and the speakers do not cut out, you'll need to hit the SPK Off button, wisely, not the Mute button nearby. This is nice and presumably keeps the headphone stage free of another 'electrically noisy' switch. Here, there is tons of detail, it is good enough and a return to Amos Lee's Keep it Loose Keep it Tight (Tidal FLAC 16-bit, 44.1kHz) has the detail and angular highs in the treble. Overall the 109s remain nicely open and quiet in the silent bits, perfect.

Musical Interlude

HF&MS Moon 250i V2
17 TRACKS
Created by Simon
Music for a review of the MOON by Simaudio 250i v2

Here's the Musical Interlude Playlist on Tidal.

MM Phono Stage

Reverting to my trusty Rega RP3 with an Ely2 cartridge upgrade for the MM phono stage I find the presentation to be perfectly fine. For me, the output is physically quite quiet and I'm having to turn things down a notch when comparing tracks immediately from the digital side but the soft and delicate vinyl experience is excellent. There is enough bounce and energy in Ray Lamontagne's underrated album Supernova (Sony Music) to engage me for an uninterrupted 40-odd minutes.

Thoughts

This is the toughest market space in HiFi, competitively priced integrated amplifiers. We are in Rega ELEX/Elicit territory, kind of; ATC SIA 100 and Exposure 3510 territory. Indeed, even Cyrus Audio is back with the tremendous i9, not to mention the Naim Nait XS3. They all offer slight differences, some with worthy DACs, others plain vanilla like the 250i v2. Nevertheless, the old MOON 250i has endured and this upgrade with the introduction of a decent MM phono stage and the always good headphone stage, just nudges the MOON250i v2 further forward in the pecking order in this arena. Read any of my older HF&MS MOON reviews and they will all say I wish I had gone MOON over Naim all those years ago and the 250i v2 does nothing to sway this assessment. For a digital partner, I would go straight for the full-width 280D and be done with it; we said in August 2021;

...the MOON 280D offers all-round digital perfection

Overall

Investigate, do your research, listen to MOON then spend your money wisely!

My original couple of hundred pounds foray into integrated amplification with a NAD 3020e in the late 80s was the beginning of a journey I'm still on with joy and happiness. This pure analogue Moon 250i V2 offers the modern-day mid-priced entry to proper HiFi with the pace and dynamism you deserve at this price point. Investigate, do your research, listen to MOON then spend your money wisely! You won't regret this decision if this is your path.

Love

- The whole package
- Understated look with...
- Powerful performance

Like

- Remote control
- Headphone stage
- MM phono stage

Wish

- I- was starting again

