

REVIEW: SIMAUDIO MOON NEO 240i INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER



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We recently announced the availability of the Simaudio MOON 240i and just had to take a closer look. This integrated amp may be found at the more affordable end of the Canadian hi-fi company's amp offerings, but it appears to have few shortcomings on its spec sheet. Could this be the perfect 'starter' amp for those getting serious about their hi-fi?

Moon by Simaudio 240i Integrated Amplifier



The MOON 240i is a full-sized component and measures just shy of 17-inches wide. It's a good-looking thing too. The model supplied for review is the two-tone black and silver version. Where the 'shoulders' on this one are silver, the ones on the alternative model are black.

It's not as weighty as some integrated amps, and much of the unit's 11 kg is due to its sturdy steel case as well as the substantial toroidal transformer which is visible through the vented top of the chassis.

The 240i uses Simaudio's favourite choice of class A/B amplification to create 50W into an 8 Ohm load. Frequency response is specified as 10Hz – 80kHz.

The first sign that this is a modern amplifier is that there are only two analogue input pairs on the back panel. However, also on-board are five digital input options (2 SPDIF, 2 Optical and one USB). The digital inputs are capable of handling very high sampling rates too. Starting from the top, the USB input will process a PCM signal as high as 384kHz, the SPDIF's: 192kHz and the optical inputs: 96kHz. DSD is also supported. There's no MQA support, but we're told that Simaudio does have plans to implement the format in their streaming products starting next year. Expect an update to MiND 2 for this.



The DAC in the 240i uses ESS Tech and is the same as found in the ACE. The internals of the 240i is pretty much the same as seen in the MOON Neo Ace that costs almost another £1,000 more than the 240i.

Thankfully, the 240i provides support for those with turntables with the owner's manual making it clear that only Moving Magnet cartridges are supported, but high-output moving coil cartridges should be fine too.

The headphone amp, taken straight from the amplifier and routed to a ¼-inch headphone jack can also be found next to the personal audio player mini-jack input.

The OLED display is large and clear and a joy to use. Tickling my gadget gland is the fact that you can rename the inputs, set volume levels and turn the blue LED under the Moon logo off, should you feel so inclined. I love these little personal touches which make the amp feel more like yours.

Furthermore, it makes it easy for other people in your household to use – instead of the display showing ‘SPDIF’, ‘Streamer’ makes much more sense to most.

The remote (CRM-3) is the third generation of Simaudio’s light-weight remotes. It feels very solid and has a bit of design flare compared to the usual basic blocks. If you prefer to get hands-on with the amp’s front-panel, the buttons are very solid, and there’s a satisfying “clunk” from the relays when you take the unit out of standby mode. The volume dial has a lovely weight to it, and overall it all feels like it’s built to last which you would expect given all Simaudio components offer a 10-year warranty.



Specifications

- Output Power at 8Ω - 50 Watts per channel
- Input Sensitivity - 370mV - 3.0V RMS
- Input Impedance - 22,100Ω
- Gain - 37dB
- Signal-to-noise Ratio - 100dB @ full power
- Frequency response (full range) - 10Hz - 80kHz +0/-3dB
- Crosstalk - -100dB
- THD (20Hz - 20kHz @ 1 watt / 50 watts) - 0.02% / 0.02%
- Intermodulation distortion - 0.005%
- PCM Bit-depth range / sampling rates - 16 - 32 bits / 44.1 - 384kHz
- DSD sample rates - DSD64, DSD128 and DSD256
- Shipping weight - 24 lbs / 11 Kgs
- Dimensions (width x height x depth) - 16.9 x 3.5 x 14.4 inch / 42.9 x 8.9 x 36.6 cm

In Use

The speakers used during this review include the Tannoy Mercury V1i, Kralk TDB-2 standmounts, as well as the new Monitor 3050i floorstanders. I also gave the newly received Audio Physic Classic 5 a blast. The turntable is a Pro-Ject 1 Xpression fitted with a Cartridgeman Music Maker III, while digital discs come spinning with thanks to an Oppo UDP-205. Streaming duties were performed by an ELAC Discovery as well as through the Oppo.

As Bootsy Collins once said on 'Rock School', "It's not the notes that make it funky, it's the spaces in between them"; or words to that effect. The contrast might not be as great as I've heard from more expensive amplifiers, but I'd dare say you'd need much deeper pockets before you started noticing what could be classed as night and day differences between those and the starter MOON.

It's the agility of this amp that really impresses. Yes, it will leave you with little change from two-grand, but I would happily put it in the ring against more expensive items. I detected a hint of smoothing and while enjoyable, if you're looking for edgier sounds, then the likes of Musical Fidelity and some others may suit you better. That being said, the precision and timing presented by the MOON are hard to fault.

Pushing the 240i with some classic Exodus and the Pleasures of the Flesh album (original pressing) I cranked up the volume. I am happy to report that this only makes things louder. By that I mean it does so neither without changing the character nor with any hint of the sound breaking up or deteriorating.



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Conclusion

The MOON by SIMAUDIO 240i is placed at the first rung of the company's offerings. However, do not assume that it isn't a capable component. The MOON 240i is perfect for people new to hi-fi as it is easy to set-up, navigate and use but I dare say that it will make a good showing when compared to competitors even at the £3,000+ mark. This also means that, as you upgrade your speakers you will get more out of the amp rather than it being the weak link in your system. The MOON 240i integrated will provide many years of happiness.