AUDIO FILE

Streaming integrated amplifier. Rated at 100W/8ohm
Made by: Simaudio Ltd, Quebec, Canada
Supplied by: Renaissance (Scotland) Ltd, Edinburgh
Telephone: 0131 555 3922
Web: www.simaudio.com; www.renaissanceaudio.co.uk
Price: £6250

hi-finews YEARBOOK 26 OUTSTANDING PRODUCT



Simaudio MOON 371

Having established the North Collection in 2023 as a home for its flagship models, Simaudio returns with the second-tier Compass Collection, led by the MOON 371 streaming amplifier. This treads the familiar 'just add speakers' path, combining a bevy of wired and wireless connections with operation via smartphone/tablet app.

The compact design (and modest 9kg weight) is made possible by the 371's MOON Hybrid Power (MHP) power supply, a custom-made switchmode type previously used in the company's DACs/processors but reimagined here for duty in an integrated amp. Power, conservatively rated at 2x100W/8ohm, is from a Class AB stage incorporating Simaudio's MOON Distortion-Cancelling Amplifier (MDCA) technology, which is where the manufacturer says it 'breaks away from traditional feedback-based' amplifier designs by eschewing global feedback. Compensation is still applied to manage gain and bandwidth, and suppress both distortion and output impedance, but this is a proprietary 'real-time error correction'.

> 'A playfully flexible amplifier – but also a serious performer'

On the front of the amp are a smooth-feeling volume control, a 6.35mm headphone output, and a display which offers album artwork, volume and source during playback. This screen, in conjunction with the adjacent buttons and rotary, is also used to access the amp's settings.

On the back panel, there's a phono input switchable between MM or MC configurations, but the lack of a USB-B input feels like a missed trick – you can, however, play from external storage through the MOON 371's USB-C host socket. Other digital inputs comprise optical, coaxial and HDMI ARC connections, Bluetooth, and built-in Wi-Fi and Ethernet. While networked units in Simaudio's North Collection utilise different configurations of ESS Sabre chips in conjunction with FPGA-based reclocking/jitter reduction, the digital stage here is less advanced, being based around a single, but well proven, ESS9039Q2M DAC.

LIVING LARGE

The MOON 371 proves that you don't necessarily need a huge slab of electronics, or to follow the separates route, to create largescale, involving music. Yes, it's slim of stature, but hearing this amplifier power floorstanders through big movie soundtracks and hard rock anthems might have you wondering why you'd ever want more grunt than is on offer here.

Hand in hand with this speaker-driving ability is a very natural rendering of leading-edge detail. The amp is quick to rise to the occasion, ensuring music never sounds sluggish, and possesses a clean and largely neutral approach.

With Randy Hanser's 'Underwater Lazarium' [Jazzhaus], the MOON 371 dug deep into the fat basslines and electric guitar licks, delivering a full-range and rich sound. The more 'ethereal' aspects of Hanser's epic carried a little bit of grain, lacking that last touch of air, yet this didn't prevent it from sounding superb overall – a performance of both scale and tonal variation.

Katie Melua's 'On The Road Again' [BMG] spotlights the singer's exemplary vocal talents against a bluesy backdrop of guitar, brass and piano. Through the MOON 371, the sound leapt forward to almost touch the listening seat, every transient leaned into with gusto. By comparison, her 'Nine Million Bicycles' took on a sweeter, more flowing feel, without the amp veering into soft, honeyed territory.

When playing 'In On It', from Pat Metheny's *Side-Eye III+* [Go Forward], Simaudio's amp seemed to resolve every small detail, and really conveyed the speed of the guitarist's sweeping jazz licks. Yet it also proved captivating, in a different way, with the serene overture to Verdi's *Aida* [Decca], where it delicately extracted the myriad strings, rose and fell with the dynamics of the piece, and offered a widescreen view of the orchestra. The MOON 371 is playfully flexible – but also a serious performer.

ABOVE: Dominated by its massive colour display, the 371's two-tone alloy fascia (all-black is also offered) hosts mute, input and brightness buttons plus a volume rotary – these controls also assist in navigating the configuration menu. The packed interior is dominated by a universal switchmode PSU feeding a Stream810 network module and digital PCB with AK5552 ADC and ESS9039Q2M DAC. The Class AB power amps each use two pairs of high current transistors

VERDICT

A high-quality take on the do-it-all integrated, Simaudio's MOON 371 combines its generous features with a sonic delivery majoring on clarity, dynamic flair and heft.

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	140W / 260W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	140W / 254W / 395W / 105W
Output imp. (20Hz–20kHz, Pre/Amp)	49ohm / 0.018-0.048ohm
Freq. resp. (20Hz–20kHz/100kHz)	+0.0dB to –0.14dB/–1.45dB
Digital jitter (48kHz / 96kHz)	<10psec / <10psec
A-wtd S/N ratio (DAC/Amp)	108.9dB / 89.7dB
Distortion (DAC, 0dBFs/Amp, 10W)	0.0008-0.002%/0.00025-0.0028%
Power consumption (Idle/rated o/p)	27W / 333W (1W standby)
Dimensions (WHD) / **Weight**	429x87x385mm / 9kg