

CEPro

Simaudio 250i v2 is a No Frills Intro to Integrated Amplifiers: CE Pro Review

The Simaudio 250i v2 integrated amplifier can be used as the foundation of a modern home AV setup without compromising quality.



Dealers can install the Simaudio 250i v2 integrated amplifier as an audiophile solution or as the focal point of a modern lifestyle AV system.

Around these parts—my house—if I were in the market for a new amplifier, Simaudio would be on my short list of manufacturers. The Canadian company designs and builds a full range of home audio components that include amplifiers, streaming products, CD players, DACs, and now speakers. Simaudio's recently announced 250i v2 integrated amplifier expands its selection of amplification products, and it is designed to complement the diverse usage scenarios of modern homeowners that are utilizing everything from streaming media to vinyl.

Entering the market at a competitive price point, the 250i v2 enables integrators to introduce their clients to the world of higher-performance audio without breaking the bank. Sending me the amplifier for review, I tried the 250i v2 in what I would consider a general “lifestyle” environment in which the unit served as a source of entertainment, but it wasn’t the focal point of the room.



Simaudio 250i v2 Integrated Amplifier Features and Setup

Simaudio, as I have noted, offers range of products that include more advanced and feature-rich integrated amplifiers. The 250i v2 is a no-frills solution that can certainly serve as the heart of an audiophile system in a small- or medium-size room, but I think its strength is a versatile integrated amp. It plays a variety of content well to support anything from streaming media and TV watching, to secondary audio applications in which it provides background content for activities such as work, cooking or reading, for example. Putting it more concisely,

I think it’s a high-performance lifestyle product. Supporting the integrated amp’s versatility is a choice of six inputs that are pre-labeled and match the source selection options on the remote and the unit’s front panel. The Simaudio 250i v2’s rear panel provides RCA connections for phono, CD, DAC, aux, TV, and pre-out options. The unit also includes an IR input and RS-232 connections for integration into a third-party control system.



Here is a partial view of the Simaudio 250i v2's rear panel inputs.

CE Pro Features

- The 250i v2 is rated to produce 50 watts per channel into 8 ohms, and 100 watts per channel into 4 ohms.
- Six line-level inputs, as well as a moving magnet (MM) phono input, and a front-panel headphone input.
- RS-232 and IR control options
- Analog design that includes the company's Moon bipolar output transistors
- Simaudio emphasizes the 250i v2 utilizes a rigid chassis construction that minimizes vibrations
- Available in a choice of finish colors

I was easily able to pull the 22-pound amp from its packaging. I set up the integrated amplifier with a Pioneer Elite Blu-ray disc player that I used as a CD player and a Meridian Direct DAC that I connected to a MacBook Air that served as a streaming source for my Apple Music account. These connections took a few minutes to complete. I ran RCA cables from the disc player into the pre-labeled CD input and another set of RCA cables from the DAC into the inputs labeled "DAC."

Completing the setup, I ran a set of 10-foot speaker cables to a pair of LSA 1 bookshelf loudspeakers. The speakers were resting on a set of 24-inch stands, and the whole system resided in a 12 x 12-foot room. I'd like to point out the speakers were about 8 feet apart; they were out from the corners of the wall, and a few inches in front of the wall.

Performance and Final Thoughts

Like my past experiences with Simaudio products, the 250i v2 integrated amplifier sounds fantastic and exudes refinement and luxury.

The integrated amp, along with the rest of the components served as an entertainment source during activities such as cooking, eating, and some critical listening sessions. Using the unit's included remote or front-panel controls I would simply select my source, which for a lot of the summer—I had amp setup for summer and early fall—I did a lot of listening to CDs in preparation for the Extreme and Living Colour show I was going to, as well as listening to the CE Pro All Star Band setlist, which I had stored as an Apple Music playlist to help me prepare for the learning of those songs on guitar.

Listening to that mix of rock, pop and R&B what really stood out to me was the top-end extension and extremely detailed midrange of the amplifier. Getting a balance of good sound in a square room is very difficult. Having speakers near the corners of a room, as well as near the wall present several acoustical challenges, but through speaker placement and the quality of the Simaudio amplifier I feel that in my home space, I was able to achieve consistently high performing listening experiences that was always engaging.

Listening to CDs like Living Colour's Vivid I thought the combination of the Simaudio 250i v2, along with the LSA speakers and Pioneer disc player extracted every bit of nuance, detail, and musicality possible. The production of that record is slick and maybe depending on your perspective a little dated sounding

it was recorded in the 1980s the biggest problem, however, is the mastering is very compressed and that zaps a lot of life from the recording.

Played through this system, I felt the 250i v2 helped to recapture some of those lost dynamics, particularly the drum and bass parts, which I thought had a nice level of weight. Cory Glover's vocals also seemed to have more power and clarity.

I'll point out that listening to streaming content through the Meridian DAC was just as enjoyable whether it was lossless content or high-resolution audio.

Moving onto to why I think the integrated amp is a nice complement to a home as a lifestyle solution: Ease of operation. I would really like to emphasize is the simplicity of the 250i v2 integrated amp. Rather than using some complex type of control method, I would either grab the remote to control the volume and select the source or simply walk over to the amp and control what I wanted from the amp's front panel.

My preference was the front panel. I could walk over and press the power button, select the source, and set the volume, walk away and joyfully listen. In a room like my 12 x 12-foot dining room it was no big deal to control the amp with the remote or physically. I could also easily drop a disc into the CD tray or select an artist or playlist using my Macbook Air. I could see many consumers using the 250i v2 in a similar way with vinyl, CDs, streaming media, cable set-top boxes (STBs) and even gaming consoles.

Like other Simaudio products that I've had the pleasure of reviewing, I was sad to send the 250i v2 back to the company. Everything this company does with its products exude quality. The fit, finish and industrial design are beautiful, the sound quality is top level, and the build quality is also high level.

Elaborating on some of the statements I made earlier, the Simaudio 250i v2 integrated amplifier easily serves as the focal point of a modern lifestyle AV system. Additionally, in small or medium-size rooms, the new Simaudio integrated amplifier can deliver audiophile listening experiences without breaking the bank.

CE Pro and Cons

Pros:

- Excellent sound quality
- The 250i v2 integrated amp includes a nice choice of inputs
- The amp's physical size and weight allow for the unit to reside within a choice of locations within a home space.

Cons:

- The remote is busy with a lot of buttons
- Some may say they want more power, but realistically if someone wants more power Simaudio's product line includes more powerful amplifiers.