



Lunar module

David Price thinks Moon's revised muscular integrated amplifier delivers a cosmic performance

When the original Simaudio Moon Evolution 600i was first launched some eight years ago at £5,750, it showcased the company's design philosophy and resulted in a very clean yet muscular-sounding Class AB solid-state amplifier with a good smattering of facilities. Now it's the turn of the v2, and having reviewed its predecessor when new, it looks very much as though little has changed – superficially at least – aside from a price hike. But hang on, the closer I look, the more I see that the Canadian

manufacturer has really given the design a thorough spring clean.

The 600i v2 is the second most expensive integrated in Moon's extensive range. A big and heavy dual mono affair, it boasts a claimed 125W per side of power into 8ohm (double that into 4ohm). The elaborate heatsinking may look a little over the top to some – it gives the amp quite a spiky look – but it's functional and in full flight things do get warm. This is partly because the amplifier runs in Class A mode at up to 5W, before switching into Class AB. The circuitry

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Simaudio Moon
Evolution 600i v2

ORIGIN
Canada

TYPE
Integrated amplifier

WEIGHT
21kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
476 x 102 x 460mm

FEATURES
● Quoted power output: 2x 125W RMS (8ohm)
● User-configurable inputs
● Inputs: 4x RCA; 1x XLR

DISTRIBUTOR
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is a no overall feedback design, which is said to give superior sound – not least because it doesn't suffer from common phase errors resulting from feedback. Bespoke, matched bipolar output transistors are claimed to give a better bass performance.

Look inside and it's very neatly – and symmetrically – laid out with twin large custom-made toroidal transformers dominating the terrain. These have lower magnetic, electrical and thermal loss, the company says. A new design of capacitors apparently brings a significant improvement over what came before; they're custom made in Japan and were developed as part of the gestation process of the £120,000-per-pair Evolution 888 monoblock power amps. The four-layer printed circuit boards have pure copper tracings and short signal paths.

The input stage is of a low-noise design, and the special M-eVOL2 volume control circuit uses MDACs (operating in a current steering R-2R configuration) to alter the audio signal's amplitude without sonic degradation, regardless of volume setting. It gives 530 different volume step settings, which will be



entirely should you so wish. All this is accessible via the front panel's Setup button, sitting just to the left of the main volume control. The main display is a large dot-matrix-style red LED affair, and is striking and easily readable from a distance. It's defeatable should you so wish. Other minor controls include input and balance, mute and standby. All of this is duplicated on the supplied, and rather swish remote control.

Sound quality

When you reach this sort of price point, you're up against a specialist world of amplifiers – your budget buys you some jolly good tube amps, some interesting Class D designs and tasty full Class A ones, too. The interesting thing about the Moon is that it's not charismatic in the way that many others are – which is another way of saying it's pretty uncoloured and doesn't get in the way. Some people spending this sort of money might not want this – preferring instead something showy and/or impressive – whereas for others it will be just what they always wanted. Some will lambast the 600i v2 for its unprepossessing manner, others will accept nothing else.

It's easy at this point to use words like 'smooth' and 'even', but this rather undersells the amplifier. It is certainly not offensive and features no standout character traits that make things more dramatic to listen to, yet it's far from bland. I kick off with Fleetwood Mac's *Sara*, which is a long and rather dreamy piece of pop-rock from the late seventies. It's a lovely song that can meander through the wrong system, but not so here. The Moon has good grip right from the start, and powers the song along by virtue of its tight yet strong bass, crisp treble and subtly detailed midband. Tonally it's slightly warmer than many transistor amplifiers, yet you would

never call it rich or syrupy. Rather, the amp serves up a balanced and detailed sound. Transparency is key here, a sense of the amplifier being able to drill down into the details of the recording and make everything clear to hear. *Los Endos* by Genesis – another classic seventies rock track with a characteristically dry sound – shows that the Moon is subtle enough to catch its emotional impact. It's this combination of neutrality allied to taut rhythmic ability and fine dynamics that makes it such a satisfying listen.

The sheer resolution of this amp is clear as soon as I cue up Kraftwerk's *Techno Pop*, recorded a decade or so later to a very high quality. Things sound dramatically different – so much sharper and more incisive, just as it should be. Tonally the 600i v2 makes it clear that this recording is

The Moon conjures up a capacious soundstage pushing far left and right

not by a bunch of hippies hanging out together; instead you get the feeling you are inside a sound laboratory with men in white coats. The track crackles with life, alongside vast dynamic swings from the hard hitting electronic percussion and bass, alongside a cymbal sound that's so sharp and fast it could take your head off. The mark of a fine amplifier is that it gives the listener a 'behind the scenes pass' to the original recording session, rather than trying to make out that everything ever recorded comes from some generic place in time and space.

Put on some soft late-seventies jazz-tinged soul music, such as Randy Crawford's *One Day I'll Fly Away*, and you're transported into another ▶

particularly useful to those running efficient loudspeakers in smallish rooms. The volume is also lockable, so there's a user-selectable maximum volume setting limit for each of the four RCA line (and one balanced XLR) inputs. You can also tweak the gain offset, so you get close matching of volume levels as you switch between inputs. Each line input is fully configurable to be home-theatre ready, bypassing the gain section

The elaborate heatsinking gives this muscular integrated a spiky look

CONNECTIONS



- 1 Loudspeaker binding posts (right channel)
- 2 4x RCA line-level analogue outputs (left channel)
- 3 RCA line-level analogue input (left channel)
- 4 Balanced XLR input (right channel)

Q&A

Costa Koulisakis

VP customer experience, Simaudio



DP: Who is the 600i v2 aimed at?

CK: Buyers seeking sound performance first and foremost, but without giving up key conveniences which add versatility and ease of use (such as input labelling, and integration into a more complex environment with external control, for example). The 600i v2 is for an evolving customer whose needs would change and, therefore, requires a music system that adapts with those changing needs. All of this without compromising sound quality, of course!

What improvements does the new model bring to the party?

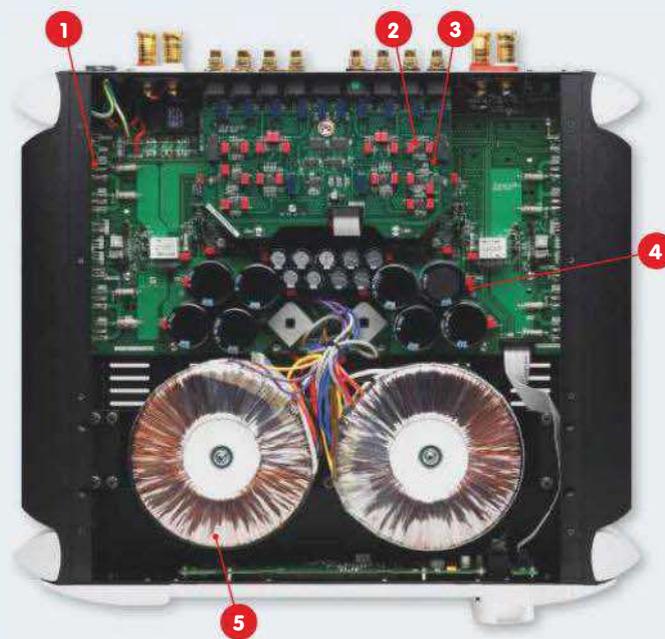
The original 600i was launched in 2010, and in that time frame we have learned a few things – some of it stemming from the 888 power amplifier development project. We wanted to pass along what we've learned to the customer – there are two main areas of change. The power supply has been upgraded with all-new, custom-made reservoir capacitors for energy storage. These provide in part the improved bass response, revealing a more articulate and tuneful foundation to the music.

The second area of improvement is in the preamplifier section, with new high-speed semiconductors together with a minor circuit design change. This has resulted in an enhancement of overall musicality, particularly dynamics and harmonic accuracy and richness.

What would you say is the company's philosophy?

We're about recreating the space in which the original recording was made. Not unlike a refined sports car, we aim to deliver to the listener all the nuances and subtleties that gives a recording its distinction and character. These details are akin to "feeling the road" in a fine sports car. The sound is at once very revealing, yet harmonically well balanced and accurate. We also highly prize dynamics, especially in this modern-day age where high-resolution recordings can offer a new insight into music that just wasn't possible that long ago.

IN SIGHT



- 1 Left channel power amplifier section (vertically installed inside heatsink)
- 2 Right channel 'M-eVOL' volume control
- 3 Right channel preamplifier section
- 4 Power supply capacitors – four per channel
- 5 Power supply transformer – one per channel



HOW IT COMPARES

Most rivals will be separate pre-power combos, but Rega's Osiris integrated (£6,125) is up close and personal against the Moon 600i v2. Sporting 162W RMS per channel it's a little louder, and has a striking CNC machined aluminium case that's every bit as handsome as it is unusual. It has a very big and bouncy sound, with oodles of power and its rhythmic skills make it the life and soul of the party. It's not perhaps quite as neutral or three dimensional as the Moon, though, but which is better is down to personal taste. As always, it's best to try before you buy.

wonderful world, where that sublime voice is the centre of attention. Her singing sounds exquisite, beautifully creamy yet immediate, earthy and natural sounding. All well and good, but the real surprise is the way the amplifier carries her subtle rhythmic phrasing. Indeed the whole track has a wonderfully supple and floaty feel. The way the gentle rhythms sashay along is more usually associated with really good tube amplifiers. I find myself getting drawn into the whole soundscape and becoming completely immersed in this beautiful ballad.

Haydn's *The Creation* is a real ear-opener; this exquisite oratorio is always a stern test of any hi-fi separate, and the Moon acquits itself most ably. It conveys the full weight and majesty of the Symphonieorchester Des Bayerischen Rundfunks, and the powerful choral work that goes along with it without complaint, conjuring up an extremely capacious soundstage that pushes far left and far right in front of me, as well as showing fine depth perspective. The 600i v2's innate good manners mean that I can hear right into the concert hall at high volumes without feeling assaulted by the proceedings. Stereo image placement proves excellent and overall the amplifier performs the trick of – to a great extent at least – disappearing from the picture. There are harder-hitting solid-state rivals out there, yet they lack the Moon's subtlety and there are

sweeter, softer tube amps that don't have such accuracy or insight. I am particularly impressed by its ability to deal out large tracts of power on dynamic crescendos without so much as breaking into a sweat, even driving the demanding loudspeakers that it is. To coin a popular phrase, it has grace, space and pace.

Conclusion

There's little to criticise here, except the price. It's not expensive for what it is, but it faces stiff competition from a wide range of amplifiers, some of which are more charismatic sounding – although not better. If you're after an old-school 'super integrated' with large reserves of power and great sound, but without all the accoutrements of modern life (built-in DAC, streamers, etc.), then this is an absolutely essential audition ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Punchy, dynamic sound; sweet tonality; superb build quality

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Some will expect more features at the price

BUILD QUALITY



WE SAY: This is a super-sounding, handsome-looking, premium integrated

FEATURES



OVERALL

