

FIRST TESTS

EXCLUSIVE, IN-DEPTH VERDICTS ON THE LATEST KIT



Moon 240i | Stereo amplifier | £1990

“An understated, yet terrifically talented amp”

FOR Smooth and dynamic; looks and sounds much pricier

AGAINST Some might prefer a more forward presentation



There's something quite spellbinding about the Moon 240i. It may be its entry-level integrated stereo amplifier (though for a company such as Moon, entry-level is almost £2000), but it has the performance and looks of something far pricier.

After running it in overnight, we start off by playing Tom Waits' *Alice* on vinyl, and are immediately drawn to the Moon's talents. Waits' characteristically raspy tone is packed with layers of detail, but it's mixed with more delicacy and subtlety than we usually hear at this level.

Even his overly gruff singing in *No One Knows I'm Gone* comes across as more refined through the Moon, without it sacrificing the solidity and depth in his singing. The song sounds just a little more bittersweet as a result.

Building the tension

Elsewhere, the muted trumpet on *Alice* sounds almost unearthly, and the bass notes have a twang to them that is often overlooked by all but the very best amps - particularly those with a few more zeros on the price tag than this Moon.

The 240i is surprisingly revealing. What we're pleased by is how it doesn't go about making jazz hands about this fact. This is an understated, yet terrifically talented amplifier, one that puts subtlety and dynamism to the fore.

From the metronomic ticking to the twin-feeling of vast, echoey space and claustrophobic tension in Hans Zimmer's *Coward*, the Moon effortlessly lays bare the subtle noises and slow build-up of tension as the composition intensifies.

Nice crisp notes

We play some of our trickier test tracks, including Radiohead's *15 Steps* and The Dead Weather's *60 Feet Tall*, and the Moon remains unflappable. Its sense of timing is agile and precise, and all instrumental strands are pulled taut while still remaining organised. The edges of notes are crisp and definite, silences are like chasms, and the solidity of each drum hit or guitar strum is deeply satisfying.

If you favour all-out muscle and attack, however, this may not be the amplifier for you. The £1600 Rega Elicit-R's leaner

character is better at delivering the crunchy, distorted guitars of Marilyn Manson's *Killing Strangers* and has a bit more bite and attitude with songs that need it, such as Eminem's *The Way I Am*.


The Moon has a smoother presentation, but it doesn't sacrifice an ounce of detail in being so listenable. What it does best is communicate the spirit of a song faithfully: from the tongue-in-cheek fun of Macklemore's *Thrift Shop* to the wistfulness of Elliott Smith's *Say Yes* - even the spitting rage behind Eminem's tracks - and so we find ourselves drawn towards playing track after track from our music library, simply enjoying the Moon's captivating sound.

Waking up the neighbours

What's more, you don't have to worry about upsetting your neighbours to enjoy the Moon at its fullest. It's rare for an amplifier to sound so engaging at low volume. Turning it up simply makes it louder - it doesn't change the sonic character, or harden it up. It doesn't even sound too loud, showing just how clean and distortion-free the Moon's performance is.



KEY FEATURES



Class A/B amplifier



50W per channel

110101 1100101
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High-res
asynchronous DAC



USB type B input

And apart from a slight leanness across the digital inputs - the analogue inputs offer that bit more depth and layers - the Moon's character stays pretty much the same across all its inputs.

Works like a dream

Although the Moon's smooth, fluid character makes it easy to pair with a number of products, to fully show off the 240i's subtleties, you'll need to partner it with some seriously capable kit.

The refined and articulate Rega Planar 6 (but with the MM Exact cartridge instead of the MC Ania) would work like a dream with the Moon 240i, as would the all-round excellent Clearaudio Concept. For speakers, we'd recommend the expressive, agile talents of the Dynaudio Forty Special standmounts or the Spendor A4 floorstanders as perfect partners.

The insides of the 240i aren't too dissimilar to those of the Moon Neo Ace streaming system we like so much. Essentially, it's a class A/B design outputting 50W of power (into 8 ohms), with an asynchronous DAC that supports playback of high-resolution files up to an impressive 32-bit/384kHz and DSD256 files, so the option is there if you have a few albums in hi-res formats.

DSD and 32-bit audio files can be played only through the amp's USB type-B input; all other digital files (including 16- and 24-bit) can be played through the 240i's other four digital inputs.

Lots of versatility

It's worth bearing in mind that the two coaxials support up to 192kHz, while the two optical inputs are limited to 96kHz - so plug in your sources accordingly.

"It's rare for an amplifier to sound so engaging at low volume. Turning it up simply makes it louder - it doesn't change or harden the sonic character"



There's a 3.5mm input for your smartphone and a 6.3mm jack too



The OLED display is crisp and clear, and you have the option to turn it off



The remote control could be better designed, but is easy enough to use

IN DETAIL...



1 The analogue connections include two pairs of RCA inputs and a moving-magnet phono stage. The phono input is for use with a turntable, while the second and third inputs are for analogue source components such as a tuner or CD player.

2 There's a lot of versatility on the digital front too. The Moon 240i has two optical inputs, two SPDIF inputs and a USB type-B connector, meaning you can connect your laptop, CD player, a streamer or even a TV to the amplifier.

3 The Moon 240i is equipped with just the one pair of speaker binding posts – quality items that will take all manner of connector.

“There is something spellbinding about the Moon 240i. We wouldn't have batted an eyelid if you'd told us it was edging closer to three grand in price”

The Moon offers a lot of versatility on the digital front. You can connect your laptop, CD player, a streamer (such as Moon's excellent Neo MiND) and even a TV to the amp. And that's before you get to the analogue section: two pairs of RCA inputs, a moving magnet phono stage for turntables and a 3.5mm input in front for hardwiring portable music players or your smartphone. There's a 6.3mm jack for plugging in your headphones, too.

Crucial information

We really like the look of the Moon 240i. It's a classy design with a sturdy metal chassis that has the kind of build quality reserved for products higher up the price range. We admire the silver curved edges and two-tone effect of our review sample for how understated and smart it looks. There's an all-black option, too.

The OLED display is crisp and clear, with only crucial information spelled out on the

screen. Buttons are responsive, and the volume dial turns smoothly and has subtle steps. The included remote - a flat, long wand with flat buttons - could be better designed and isn't essential to using the amp, but it's enough easy to use.

Delve into the set-up menu using the front-panel buttons, and you'll find options to rename inputs, set volume levels, and turn the blue LED under the Moon logo off if it's distracting you. Simple stuff, and all easy to navigate through.

Happy home

As we said at the start of this review, there's something spellbinding about the Moon 240i. We seriously wouldn't have batted an eyelid if you told us it was edging closer to three grand in price.

It's a gorgeous piece of kit, and if you have the system for it, we think you'll be very happy with this Moon in your home. We know we would.

We like the Moon's classy silver and black two-tone effect. There's an all-black option too



SYSTEM BUILDER

This kit will get the best from your Moon



STEREO SPEAKERS

Dynaudio Special Forty £2500 ★★★★★

Partnered with suitably talented kit, these superb standmounters will shine



STREAMER

Moon Neo MiND £1700 ★★★★★

Delivers the kind of musical performance we rarely hear from streamers at this price



TURNTABLE

Clearaudio Concept £1000 ★★★★★

A thoroughly sorted, easy-to-own package with great sound. What more do you want?

Total build £7190

WHAT HI-FI? says

Rating ★★★★★

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

FEATURES ★★★★★

VERDICT A stunningly revealing and dynamic performance puts the Moon 240i integrated amplifier in a class of its own