

Devialet and SAM

MARTIN COLLOMS FIRST TACKLES THE DEVIALET *D200* INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER, THEN THE FREE SAM TECHNOLOGY UPGRADE FOR LOUDSPEAKER CORRECTION AND PROTECTION.

This evaluation comprises two parts: an introduction to the Devialet amplifier (in this case the current *D200* model), and subsequently the SAM development, which arguably better characterises these amplifiers for driving many popular loudspeakers. Suitable loudspeakers appear in an expanding listing published on the Devialet site. (The SAM sound quality report is based on using the *D200* amplifier.)

Devialet, founded in 2007, has been busy improving and extending its compact high power, proprietary amplifier offer since the introduction several years ago. We have recently had the opportunity to take a closer look at the amplifier performance while also examining the newly introduced SAM technology – a free software download that can personalise the amplifier for use with many different loudspeaker models.

Full remote control is supplied from an elegant and effective non-line-of-sight radio frequency handset. The unit may also be operated *via* an App for Android and Apple devices (smartphones or pads). The core design includes a powerful high resolution volume control with over 100 steps of 0.5dB, plus many pre-amp facilities and input options covering numerous sources, including MM and MC for analogue vinyl discs, alongside S/PDIF, AES EBU, USB and WiFi digital sources. Some of these facilities may come with minor concessions to absolute fidelity, but not every audiophile wants to sacrifice convenience and flexibility in the quest for ultimate fidelity.

This compact 200W/ch hybrid Class A/Class D integrated amplifier has both analogue and digital inputs and outputs. The phono stage, for example, comprises an input pre-amplifier with variable sensitivity and cartridge loading for both MM and MC types. (Note that access to the ground terminal is very cramped.) Several variants of RIAA equalisation may be preselected, and indeed changed later if required. Cartridge channel imbalance may also be corrected, and there's a choice of sampling rates for the required digital conversion, with 24-bit/96kHz preferred on sound quality grounds. Both the phono and analogue line level signal inputs are digitised before continuing to the main processor, and these

ripped signals may also be loaded onto an external hard drive.

A wireless network control point (WiFi or Ethernet) is provided for a universal streamer Devialet AIR application (fully compatible with PC, iOS and Android devices). It also has an asynchronous USB input (fully compatible with Mac and PC) for computer audio connection. The substantial mix of XLR and RCA phono terminals on the rear panel may be configured for either digital (including AES/EBU) and/or analogue inputs and outputs (the latter, for example, as a feed to a headphone amplifier). A mono analogue feed is provided for a subwoofer, and (when appropriately set up) special digital outputs for daisy chaining these amplifiers in double mono and multi-amp configurations.

Power is supplied via an IEC connector (with no on/off switch). When installing the amplifier, it is better to fit the IEC connector first before plugging in at the wall socket, as the alternative action disabled our sample. (This electronically protected amplifier has no user replaceable fuse.)

After a period of quiet, the amplifier automatically goes into standby. Before feeding audio it should be woken up by using the remote or the front power button, as the auto-start otherwise clips a few notes off the first track. Stereo speaker outlets are supplied for spade connections and 4mm plugs, though heavy duty cables may present problems and need special preparation.

One more step is necessary, for which I am indebted to Alan Sircom. As he explained, the sound quality is significantly disturbed unless the Air/WiFi facility is either paired to a device or disabled. If not it hunts, its radio powerfully seeking attention and reducing sound quality.

Before I began the more critical testing I did ask for a specific Devialet party trick to be demonstrated. Here the amplifier is turned on its back, the cover unscrewed, and then the main Class D power amp section is simply detached, unplugged and lifted away leaving only that small class A stereo *core* buried underneath. Proof of its viable independence is then amply shown as it continues to play music to a good standard up to moderate, albeit very limited loudness.