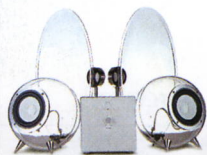


STEREO AMPLIFIER
Unison Research
Preludio
£1795



SPEAKER SYSTEM
Ferguson Hill
FH07
£600 Page 94



STEREO SPEAKERS
Dali
Mentor 2
£2200 Page 95

Temptations

THE WORLD'S MOST DESIRABLE KIT

STEREO AMPLIFIER
UNISON RESEARCH
PRELUDIO



£ 1795

FOR

A lovely, natural presentation; fine dynamics and timing; great build and finish

AGAINST

Has a low power output, so needs careful matching with speakers

VERDICT

Partnered with care, this little valve amp produces one of the most entertaining performances you will hear at this price

It's wood-clad, only produces 15 watts per channel, and costs almost £2000. So why do we love this **Unison Research Preludio** amplifier so much?

THERE ARE TWO ways of approaching the Preludio, the new integrated amp from Unison Research. Either you think almost two grand is far too much money to pay for an amp that struggles to deliver 15 watts per channel. Or, you might consider it a sensibly priced way to get a real taste of what true high-end valve kit is all about. After spending some considerable time with this little wood-clad amplifier, we're happy to go with the latter view.

Yes, its power is limited, but use easy-to-drive sensitive speakers – say, 90dB or above – and you'll have enough volume to keep all but hardcore head-bangers happy. Compare the Preludio to some of

“Ready to turn the page and write off this Unison amp as a waste of time? We wouldn't do that just yet”

the high-power alternatives – Myryad's 150 watt per channel MXI2150, or AVI's even brawnier 200 watt Laboratory Series integrated – and there's no doubt that it conveys less authority, scale and punch than either of these rivals. Nor is bass as taut or as precise, either. Ready to turn the page and write off this Unison as a waste of time? We wouldn't advise your doing that just yet.

Sonic weaknesses are slight, strengths huge

You should also know that the weaknesses, such as they are, are only really shown up next to the class-leaders, and are balanced by quite the most fluid and natural midrange we've heard at this price.

Consider areas such as low-level dynamics, and the ability to render instruments and voices in a convincingly full-bodied manner, then it becomes clear that the Preludio is something special indeed. Make no mistake: it's a more than a viable

alternative to the established class-leading stereo amplifiers.

Listen to music as wide-ranging as A Tribe Called Quest's *The Low End Theory* and Handel's *Messiah* and this little integrated delivers it all with plenty of enthusiasm.

Yes, that's right. This is one of those rare valve integrations that trades the stereotypical, warm, lush valve sound for something that's faster, more neutral and pleasingly rhythmic. The result is an amplifier that entertains and inspires: not something you can say about many rivals, even at this price.

Impressive fit, finish and features

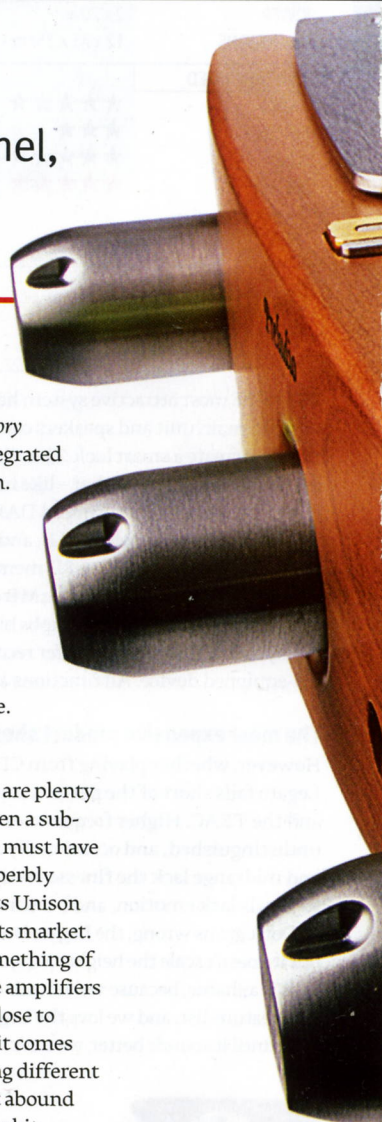
Let's not forget the practicalities: there are plenty of inputs, a neat remote control, and even a sub-woofer output for those who positively must have masses of bass. The Preludio is built superbly – as well as any of the high-end products Unison makes – and looks like nothing else in its market.

Add it all up, and we think this is something of a bargain. There might be cheaper valve amplifiers out there, but none we've heard come close to matching this Italian integrated when it comes to all-round talent. Go on: try something different from the conventional silver boxes that abound at this price level. You won't regret it one bit.



UNISON RESEARCH PRELUDIO
POWER OUTPUT 15 watts per channel
LINE LEVEL INPUTS 4
PHONO STAGE No
TAPE LOOPS 1

PREAMP OUTPUT No
SPEAKERS 1 pair
STONE CONTROLS No
FINISHES Wood/stainless steel & black





SON
BERCH