



Marantz PM-10

In this age of do-it-all integrated amplifiers that offer all sorts of extra talents – digital-to-audio conversion, network streaming, Bluetooth and AirPlay connectivity, and more – it's refreshing to come across an integrated amplifier that focuses on being just that.

Not that the Marantz PM-10 is any old integrated amp. If there was any doubt that the marque is capable of producing components that meet truly high-end expectations, then the PM-10 should address those unequivocally.

If you read our March issue cover feature, you'll already know that the PM-10, and its partnering SA-10 disc player, are the latest high-enders from Marantz, replacing the SC-7 pre-amp, MA-9 mono-block power amps and SA-7 disc player.

At the time that trio exemplified what Marantz considered high-end. Now, 15 years later, the 10-Series represents significant improvements in construction and execution.

The PM-10 isn't actually an integrated amp in the traditional sense of the word. Instead, it combines a pre-amp and four separate monoblock power amps on a single chassis. The power amps are switch-mode Class D devices, with a bridged pair for each channel.

Maximum rated power is 200 watts per channel into 8 ohms and 400 watts into 4 ohms, coupled to a high current output. The circuit design is fully balanced from input to output, in the interests of signal integrity and noise rejection.

The PM-10 features individual power transformers for the pre-amp and power amp stages, and a separate power supply for each power amp channel. In addition, the microprocessors controlling key functions, including volume control, are separately powered, too.

The substantial chassis features a double-layer, copper-plated construction, together with a non-magnetic alloy enclosure.

Indeed, the entire amplifier exudes an air of robust but meticulous execution

in a way that's classy and unequivocally high end. The styling follows the current Marantz design approach, with a central section featuring a porthole-style front display, and curved ends extending on either side.

The clean, minimalist design approach is underscored by switchgear limited to twin rotary controls for volume and source selection, a power button and a headphone jack. Vertical illumination adds a touch of glamour, but can also be switched off if found to be distracting.

The high-end theme continues on the rear panel, where the copper plating is proudly displayed, while the inputs are thoughtfully arranged and carefully executed. Two balanced inputs enjoy pride of place, while there are four line-level RCA input sets, and a MM/MC-configurable phono stage input.

The PM-10 caters for recording devices via a line-level RCA output set, while a pre-amp input allows the Marantz to be employed as a power amp only. Two pairs



of binding posts are provided, allowing the simultaneous use of two speaker sets, or for convenient bi-wiring, especially where thicker-gauge speaker cables are employed. Again, attention to detail and design is exemplary.

The PM-10 sounds like it looks: bold and emphatic, with a broad tonal range, and plenty of authority. That said, there's a musical empathy, an ability to explore the heart and the soul of the music, that makes this more than just another muscle amp.

Yes, it shows off plenty of urge and momentum, so that the delivery is always agile and precise. But there is also a sense of finesse and elegance, together with a truthfulness that makes listening to music in the PM-10's company an engaging and engrossing affair.

The PM-10 partnered well with our reference Vivid Audio B1-Ds, making the most of the speakers' revealing nature to create a generous and broadly dimensioned sound image. The stage was convincingly three-dimensional, creating a sound with an almost physical presence, while individual instruments were faithfully, believably rendered.

The rousing 'Woo Sé Mama', off Paul Weller's recently released *A Kind Of Revolution* (Warner FLAC 44/24) proved that the Marantz can rock with the best of them. The track was rendered with a real sense of urge and power, while the amp displayed an ability to spread the music deep and wide across the seamless soundstage.

It wasn't in the least intimidated by the slightly dark, bass-heavy mix, ensuring that the low frequencies were delivered with authority, but ensuring that detail and clarity weren't compromised in the process.

The electric guitars had just the right edge, the drums thumped and pumped with real power, and the synths swooped and soared across the stage. In short – foot-tapping stuff!

Turning to something a little more introspective, the PM-10 delivered the luscious delicacy of Joan Shelley's voice on 'If The Storms Never Came' from the singer's eponymous set (No Quarter FLAC



VITAL STATS

Power output	2x 200 watts (8 ohms, 1 kHz, 0,05% THD) 2x 400 watts (4 ohms, 1 kHz, 0,1% THD)
Frequency response	5 Hz – 50 kHz (±3 dB)
Signal-to-noise ratio	111 dB (line-level, 2V, rated output)
Inputs	2x stereo XLR, 3x stereo RCA, 1x MM/MC phono, 1x pre-amp input
Outputs	1x stereo RCA
Dimensions (WxDxH)	440 x 453 x 168 mm
Weight	21,3 kg
Price	R139 990

Verdict

Energetic and authoritative, with a real ability to translate scale and dynamics. A slightly dark tonal signature benefits bottom-end presence, but clarity and finesse ensure expressive musicality. Exemplary build quality surpasses most high-end standards.

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OUR RATING: 88 / 100





44/16) with a clarity of purpose and an intrinsic accuracy that propelled the singer right into the centre of the listening room.

The Marantz allowed every vocal inflection, every finger slide on the guitar's fret board, to be heard with an unencumbered accuracy that made for an almost eerie sense of realism. The acoustic guitars on either side of the soundstage were precisely rendered, and there was a meticulousness to the delivery that allowed a close and personal involvement with the music.

For all its power and precision, the Marantz treated the material with a tenderness that only added to the overall integrity and enjoyment of the music.

A combo made in blues heaven, Taj Mahal and Keb' Mo's marvellous *TajMo* (Concord 44/16 FLAC) showcases the best of both these blues giants with riveting, foot-tapping results.

On 'She Knows How To Rock Me', the density of the arrangement didn't deter the Marantz in the slightest: it managed to spotlight the finely picked guitars of the two performers with crystalline accuracy, while also bringing their vocals to the fore.

The bass and percussion, which can sound overwhelming on lesser systems, were kept perfectly in check without emasculating depth or presence. The result was an enveloping, fascinating sound.

The trebles of this mix can become a little bright, but while the inherent honesty and accuracy of the Marantz revealed that brightness unequivocally, it didn't detract from the overall musicality of the performance.

Similarly, the driving bass drum beat on 'All Around The World' can test the capabilities and composure of even the beefiest amps, but the PM-10 took the challenge in its stride, and delivered the beat with all the impact and urge it demanded.

A lucid production allows the evocative vocals of Imelda May to transcend the rockabilly energy of her previous performances, and to be channelled into new, more sensitive territory on *Live. Life. Flesh. Blood* (Verve 44/16 FLAC).

The Marantz made the most of those vocals, showcasing the texture, the

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intonation and the sheer power of May's renditions. On 'Black Tears', her voice is allowed to soar high and unrestrained, with Jeff Beck's guitar solo providing a spine-tingling counterpoint.

The tonal richness of the recording was compellingly rendered, with the restrained percussion and reverb-rich bass adding foundation and substance to the music. The music had an almost tactile realism that added to a pervasive sense of realism.

On 'Leave Me Lonely', the fuzz-edged, hungry guitars, the impatient beat of the music and the driving bass were rendered with real muscle and impact, but May's vocals were never overwhelmed, rather remaining in full, glorious command of musical proceedings.

And that really sums up the essence of the Marantz: gloriously musical, and always in full command. This is an amp that always acknowledges the art, the heart and the soul of the music, and always has the muscle, the energy and the authority to do full justice to the scale and momentum of a performance.

Add real finesse, a compelling sense of dynamics and an overall generosity of tonal range to the equation, and you have an amplifier that deserves high-end respect.

Deon Schoeman

Software

Paul Weller — *A Kind Of Revolution* (Warner FLAC 44/24)

Joan Shelley — *Joan Shelley (No Quarter)* (FLAC 44/16)

Taj Mahal and Keb' Mo' — *TajMo* (Concord 44/16 FLAC)

Imelda May — *Live. Life. Flesh. Blood* (Verve 44/16 FLAC)

Bruckner — *Symphony No. 7 Von Karajan/Vienna Philharmonic* (DG 44/16 FLAC)

Diana Krall — *The Girl In The Other Room* (Verve SACD)

Associated Equipment

Primare PRE32/MM30 pre-amp/streamer

Parasound Halo A21 stereo power amplifier

Lumin D1/L1 network player

Marantz SA-10 SACD player

Vivid B1D loudspeakers