

Atoll IN-200 Evolution Solid-state integrated amplifier

A lovely French import.

\$2,900
atoll-electronique.com



It's great to be back. Yeah, I knew I couldn't stay away from the game forever. And it was this understated French beauty that pulled me back. Atoll has always delivered incredible performance and value, not knuckling under to Chinese manufacturing – and for that, I salute them. I'm excited to tell you about this amp.

Much like the beautiful yet understated ladies strolling around Paris with no more than a simple black outfit, a nice watch, and perfect hair, the IN-200 is the same. Clad in black, (silver one shown here for the variation on the theme) with a minimum of controls and a simple yet effective OLED display, it is an amplifier you will never tire of. The anodized finish on the front panel is done to perfection, and it feels good when you pick it up. No class-D lightweight here!

Its 120 watts per channel into 8-ohms is delivered with completely discrete circuitry. Bipolar devices are used in the low-level section, and power MOSFETS in class AB configuration produce the output signal. While Atoll doesn't mention it, I wouldn't be surprised if the first 5-8 watts are in class A mode, considering how smooth and refined this amplifier sounds.

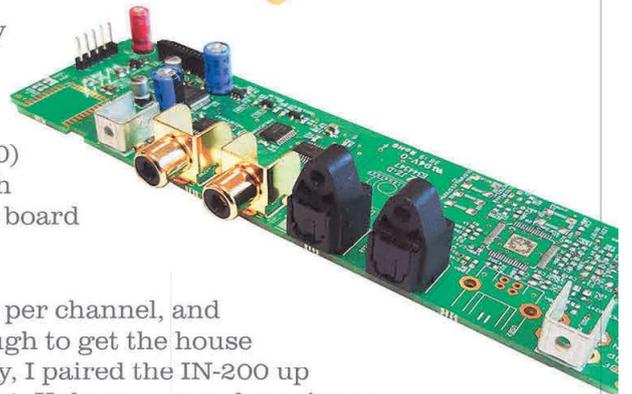
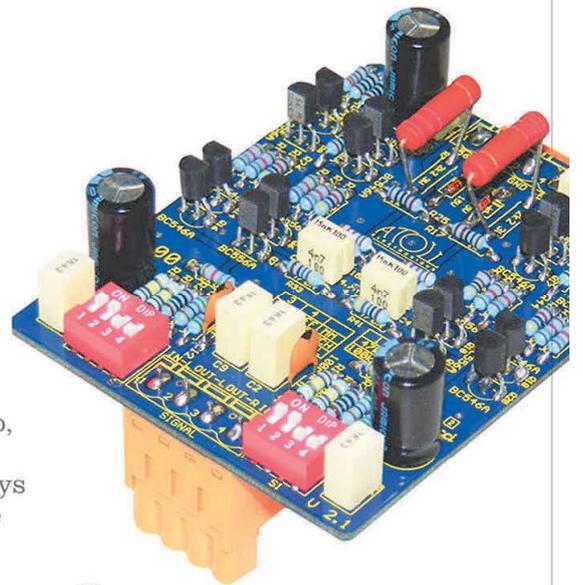
Did I tell you this amplifier is only \$2,900? Wow. This is the solution for those sniping about the ever-escalating price of audio gear. If you are more of a one-box person, you can add the P50 MM board (\$130) or the P100 MC board (\$190) to have it all on the same chassis. We did not get a chance to sample this, but past experience with Atoll is that they always overdeliver. Considering the average budget-conscious music lover will probably pair this up with a \$500-\$1,500 table/cartridge combo, this will not be a bad place to start. The good news is that the IN-200 is resolving enough that you can always step up to a better analog front end later, through one of the high-level inputs.

If you are more of a digital person, or a heavy-duty analog person that just wants digital as a secondary source, the DA100 DAC board is available (\$300), which will decode digital information up to 24/192. The higher-priced (\$500) DA200 board supports DSD via USB and Bluetooth connectivity. Keep in mind, you can only have one board installed, so make it count. Ah, commitment.

As I mentioned, this amplifier produces 120 watts per channel, and for most people, that's going to be more than enough to get the house rocking. Just to keep the Magnepan brigade happy, I paired the IN-200 up with a pair of 1.7s I keep around simply for this test. Unless you need maximum volume, in a medium-sized room, the IN-200 gets the job done. Spoiler alert: Magnepans never deliver maximum volume, even with a thousand watts per channel. Seriously, a nice used pair of recent Maggies and this amp will deliver a lot of musical joy, thanks to the IN-200's level of resolution.

Rounding out the speaker choices for this review are a pair of Vandersteen 2s (about 2017 vintage), a pair of MartinLogan Aerius I's (way harder to drive than Magnepans), and a pair of Focal Sopra 3s. Nearly all of these speakers are more expensive than you might expect for a pairing, yet this amplifier is polished.

Tracking through a lot of densely packed music proves this amplifier can unravel the most compacted musical selections with ease. I'm talking 80s arena rock and some Nine Inch Nails. Totally non-audiophile. Of course, moving on to the acoustic version of Alanis Morissette's *Jagged Little Pill* goes deeper in revealing how much nuance this budget amp is able to muster.



The way this amplifier illuminates the simple melodies presented, capturing the leading and trailing edges of the piano and acoustic guitar, is very impressive. There's a lot of air in between the notes and the instruments, which doesn't always come through. The Atoll amp feels way bigger and way more evolved than a few similarly priced things I've had my hands on lately.

Playing harder hitting heavy rock, and bass-heavy electronic tracks again show off a level of control and composure that is way beyond what you'd expect a \$3,000 integrated to accomplish. Deep bass, whether acoustic or electric, strikes an excellent balance of extension and control, while retaining texture and detail.

One of the most impressive features of this amplifier is the sheer grunt it delivers. Even when really rocking out, it was tough to push the IN-200 to clipping, and when it does, it gives fair warning by flattening the soundstage a bit first. Taking this out to my garage system for a few days' worth of cooling system refreshment in my '73 BMW 2002Tii and a pair of Klipsch LaScalas, I was able to annoy the neighbors on multiple occasions. Connected to speakers with 100db/1-watt sensitivity, I felt like I was back at Milwaukee's Summerfest at the Rock Stage. Awesome.

Though primarily acoustic music is not my jam (I'm the crappy boomer rock guy, remember?), it's important to investigate this to put the amplifier in further context. Following our publisher's lead, and borrowing his SACD copy of The Jung Trio, and a Decca box set, reveals how natural acoustic instruments feel through this amplifier. Ok, back to Whitesnake. I'm not kidding.

The rest of the amplifier is refreshingly simple. The display is easy to read, and the controls are well thought out. Plus, you aren't being penalized for a mega remote control. What they supply works well, and doesn't make you feel like too much of the budget was spent here. Thank goodness it doesn't need an app to work either.

What makes the Atoll INT-200 integrated amplifier our last Exceptional Value Award of the year is pure sound quality. We've been talking a lot about music lovers who will cough up the cost of a decent used motorcycle for a hifi system, but it better deliver musical excellence. Fancy casework and features not required. Atoll has been around for a long time, so you can be assured of the IN-200's reliability. Don't believe me? Check the internet trolls. I couldn't find a single internet post from anyone complaining about this brand's bad behavior.

If you're a music lover wanting to build a great system on a reasonable budget, the Atoll INT-200 is an anchor for a system you will enjoy for years.

Highly recommended.

