

Monrio MC206

Monrio presents an updated version of its longest-standing integrated amplifier, a discreet yet highly versatile unit that excels in transparency.



Monrio is a small-scale manufacturer founded almost 25 years ago by Giovanni Gazzola, who, despite his advancing years, continues to lead the company and personally design its catalog of products. The brand name itself (pronounced with the emphasis on the “i”) is derived from “Monte Rio,” the founder’s birthplace.

Starting with its first integrated amplifier, the MC202 (featured in AUDIOREVIEW issue no. 110), which was designed nearly a quarter-century ago in collaboration with Stan Curtis, the series evolved in a somewhat non-linear sequence: following the MC202 came the MC200 (AUDIOREVIEW issue no. 118), then the MC205, MC207, and finally, a decade ago, the first version of the

MC206. This latest model is currently the longest-standing product in Monrio’s catalog.

Being a semi-artisanal production in the best sense of the term, the products are continually refined without necessarily resulting in new models or versions. In this case, while retaining its original name, the latest iteration of the MC206 integrated amplifier has undergone significant revisions to enhance performance and reliability.

Construction

The construction is solid and straightforward, with a chassis that is relatively compact (less than 10 cm tall and just over 30 cm deep) and made entirely of thick aluminum panels. The design is minimalist, more Scandinavian than Italian, featuring the classic central volume knob on the front panel, the brand name engraved on the right-hand side, and a series of slightly larger input selection buttons aligned on the left compared to earlier versions. Other than the power button, there are no additional controls or display of any kind.

The rear connections include five analog RCA inputs, one of which is a direct A/V input, and a digital input in an outdated USB-B format. Signal connections are complemented by a Tape Out output, which is also somewhat unusual in a 21st-century integrated amplifier, and a subwoofer output.

The speaker terminals have been relocated to the center and spaced apart for greater convenience compared to their previous compact, square arrangement on the right side.

Removing the heavy top cover immediately reveals that the circuitry topology has been entirely redesigned. The long heatsink housing the array of transistors is now centrally positioned, acting as a shield between the main board and the power supply section, which features a new toroidal transformer contributing to the increased power output from 90 to 100 W per channel.

Almost all components, primarily discrete ones, have undergone a general upgrade. The transistors, previously Sanyo SD1047 (140 V/12 A), have been replaced with Sanken SC3263 (230 V/15 A).

The main capacitors have been carefully selected and now include Vishay, Wima, and Cornell Dubilier, along with TE Connectivity ER74 series wire-wound resistors encased in silicone. The volume is controlled by a 10 kΩ motorized potentiometer.

The only section that seems unchanged is the digital one, identical to the first version. However, digital functionality is not the primary focus of this amplifier and should be seen as a welcome feature without high expectations for performance.

The remote control is also made of

MONRIO MC206 Stereo Integrated Amplifier

Distributor for Italy: Monrio Audio, Via Alessandria 35, 29121 Piacenza. Tel. 3341996314 - info@monrio.it
Price: euro 3,805.00 (VAT included)

SPECIFICATIONS DECLARED BY THE MANUFACTURER

Type: Integrated amplifier. **Output power:** 2x100 W at 8 ohms. **Input sensitivity:** 380 mV. **Input impedance:** 20 kΩ. **Frequency response:** 10-100k Hz ±0.01 dB. **THD+N:** 0.03%; 1 kHz. **Signal-to-noise ratio:** 84 dB unweighted. **Onboard DAC:** 192 kHz/24-bit stereo. **Transformer:** 300 W toroidal. **Inputs:** 4x RCA line, 1x direct A/V, 1x USB type B digital. **Outputs:** 1x Tape RCA, 1x active subwoofer. **Remote control:** included. **Finish:** silver. **Dimensions (WxHxD):** 438x92x330 mm. **Weight:** 12 kg



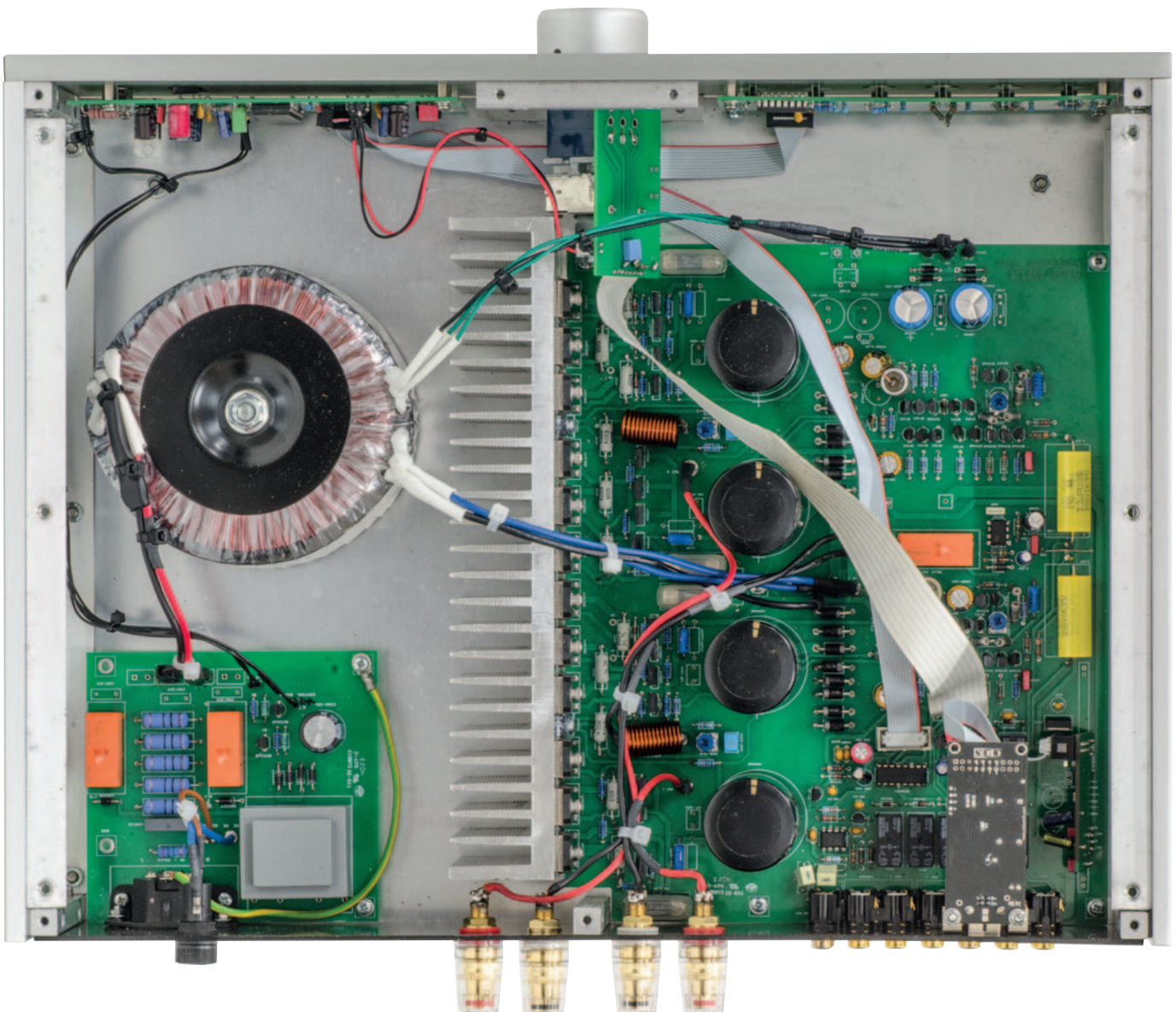
The rear panel features all input and output connectors, which are of good quality and easily accessible.

solid aluminum, with a quadrangular shape that is not particularly ergonomic. Its small, uniform buttons are not very user-friendly.

Listening Experience

The system used for testing the MC206 included the Technics SL-

G700 M2 CD player and streamer as the source and Opera Grand Callas speakers. Initially, we doubted whether the Monrio could handle



Assembly is entirely manual and almost exclusively employs high-quality discrete components, such as Vishay, Wima, and Cornell Dubilier capacitors. The internal layout is well-organized, with careful attention to the placement of the various sections. Note the placement of the transistor heatsink, which shields the power supply section from the other components.

such demanding speakers, considering switching to something less challenging.

Right away, the MC206 demonstrated its preference for vocals with "Time Peace" by Terry Callier, followed by the Notting Hillbillies' classic "Your Own Sweet Way." In both cases, not only were the vocals

coherent and detailed, but the midrange as a whole impressed us. The same result was confirmed with "Fly Me to Sinatra," Greta Panettieri's tribute to "The Voice," where every nuance of her voice was clear, even the most delicate whispers.

Fleetwood Mac's "The Chain" tested the MC206's bass response. The am-

plifier delivered rhythmical and tight bass without exaggeration or coloration. While not earth-shaking, the bass was immediate and musical.

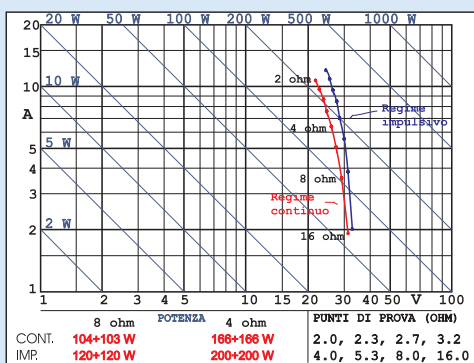
In Prokofiev's "Piano Concerto No. 2," Beatrice Rana's piano treble sounded open yet soft and natural. In both versions of Mussorgsky's

Monrio MC206 Integrated Amplifier

MEASURED SPECIFICATIONS

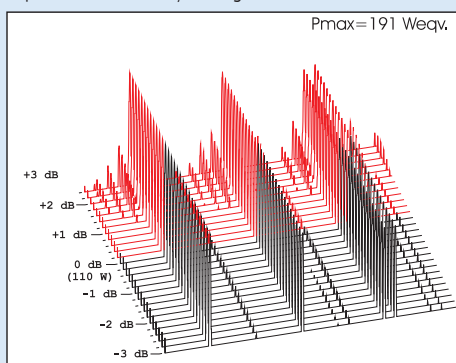
OUTPUT POWER

LOAD LIMIT CHARACTERISTIC



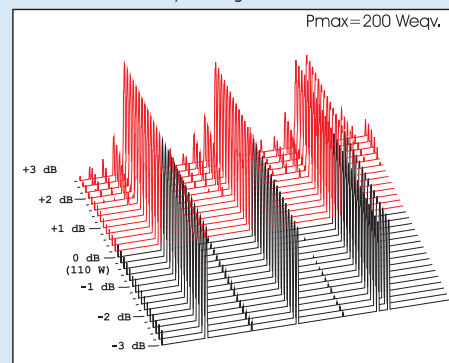
TRITIM UNDER IMPULSIVE CONDITIONS

Capacitive load: 8 ohms/-60 degrees



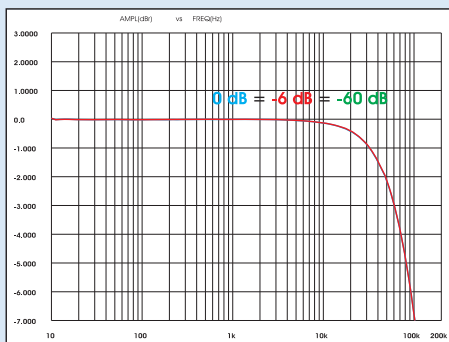
TRITIM UNDER IMPULSIVE CONDITIONS

Inductive load: 8 ohms/+60 degrees



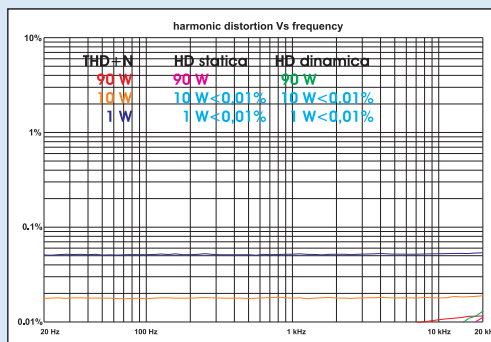
FREQUENCY RESPONSE

(at 2.83 V on 8 ohms)



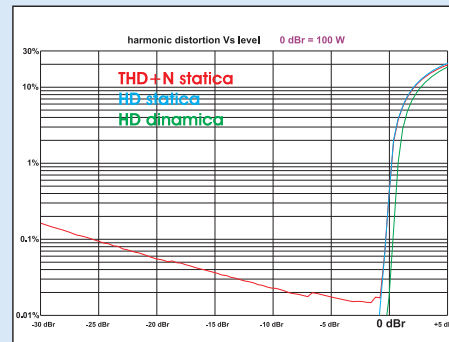
FREQUENCY/DISTORTION TRENDS

(load 8 ohms, test power levels 1, 10, 100, and 136 watts)



POWER/DISTORTION TRENDS

(0 dB equals 100 watts at 8 ohms)



Damping factor on 8 ohms: 367 at 100 Hz; 302 at 1 kHz; 387 at 10 kHz; 315 at 20 kHz

CD INPUT

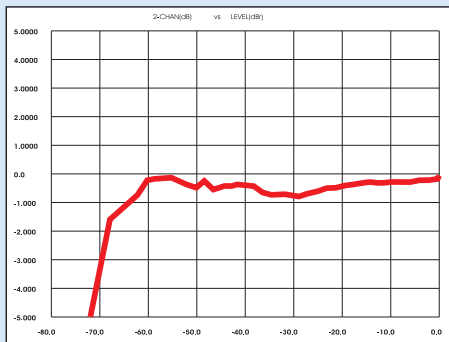
Impedance: 19 kΩ / 35 pF. Sensitivity: 432 mV for 100 watts at 8 ohms. Weighted noise voltage "A" referenced to the input: terminated at 600 ohms, 3.1 μV. Signal-to-noise ratio weighted "A": terminated at 600 ohms, ref. 500 mV in, 103.5 dB.

Measured performance in DAC mode (PCM), USB input

Power output, 0 dB equals 10 V at 8 ohms

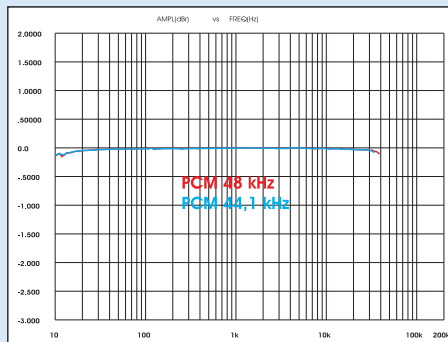
CHANNEL IMBALANCE

(as a function of volume attenuation, from 0 to -80 dB)



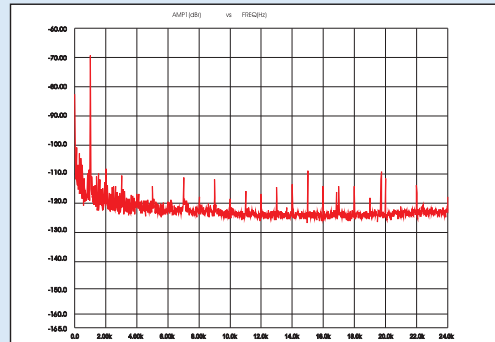
FREQUENCY RESPONSE WITH PCM SIGNALS

(-3 dB, Fs 44.1 kHz and 48 kHz)



HARMONIC DISTORTION WITH DSD SIGNALS

(1 kHz tone at -70.31 dB, Fs 48 kHz)



“Night on Bald Mountain” conducted by Pappano, the orchestral textures and spatial depth were remarkably well-rendered.

Listening to the MC206 is highly enjoyable, characterized by its soft, airy soundstage and excellent dynamic control. Even at higher volumes, the amplifier maintained its

For the MC206, Monrio specifies only its power output at 8 ohms (100 watts per channel), which might lead one to expect suboptimal performance with lower impedance loads. However, our **Load Limit Characteristic** immediately disproves this assumption, showing two closely aligned curves (continuous and impulsive regimes) with consistent upward trends as the load impedance decreases, peaking at 292+292 watts impulsive on 2 ohms. The **Tritim tests under reactive loads in impulsive conditions** also show no issues, with saturation occurring well above the nominal power rating and only minor asymmetry at lower levels. For a capacitive load, the maximum undistorted peak current measured was **±20 amperes**.

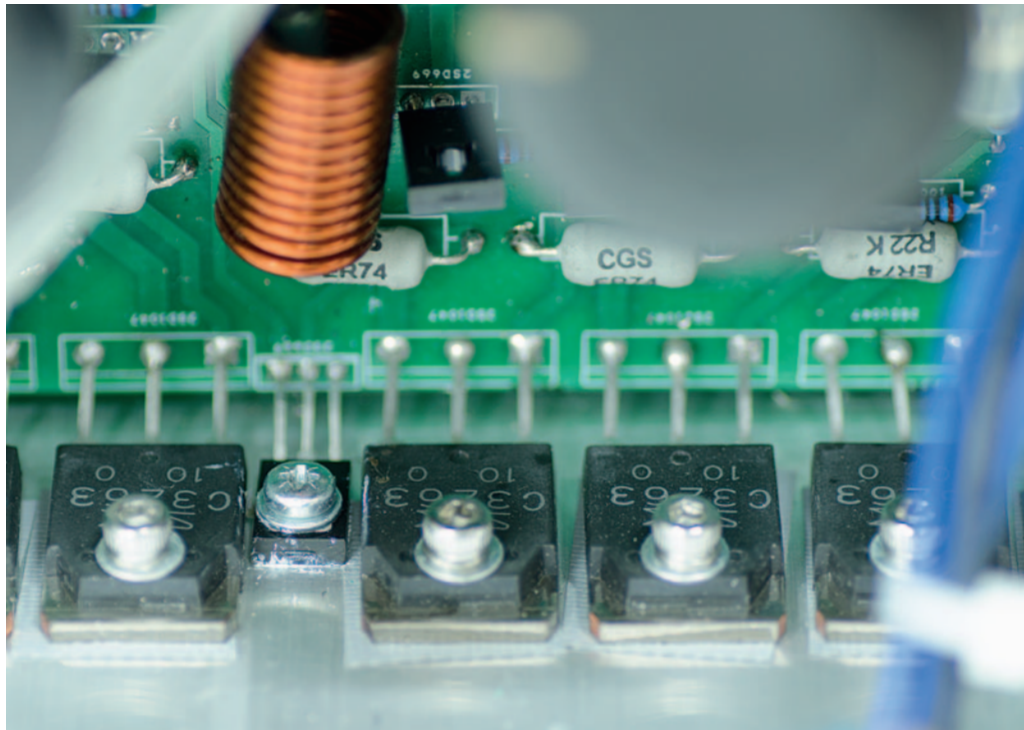
An **internal impedance** peaking at approximately 26 milliohms ensures that even speakers with challenging impedances can be driven effectively. Bi-wiring can also be beneficial here, though the single pair of output terminals per channel limits flexibility.

Positive notes extend to the **frequency response**, which, while not overly extended (-0.4 dB at 20 kHz, -3 dB at 60 kHz), remains consistent at any volume level. The **channel balance** is equally impressive, with the supplied potentiometer keeping divergence within 1 dB up to 64 dB attenuation (effectively at near-zero volume).

The distortion plots (**frequency vs. distortion and level vs. distortion**) are practically empty, except for the curves including noise, which is low in any case (the **S/N ratio weighted** exceeds 103 dB). The saturation characteristic is very precise, likely due to the feedback level.

The **digital section** can be considered a convenient bonus, as it does not match the rest of the amplifier in terms of compatibility (no driver is available, and under Windows 10/64-bit, we couldn't process PCM signals above 48 kHz) or general performance. However, within the audio band, the frequency response is perfectly linear.

Fabrizio Montanucci



Close-up of the new Sanken transistors and TE Connectivity ER74 series wire-wound power resistors encased in silicone.



The remote control is entirely made of aluminum and has a quadrangular shape that is not very ergonomic. The buttons are not easily accessible, and most of them are not needed for an amplifier.

transparency and detail, delivering any track effortlessly.

Conclusions

The impressions the MC206 gave us during the listening tests were immediately positive and, in some ways, surprising. This is likely due to the fact that its rather understated appearance—offering few aesthetic concessions and no features beyond the core function of signal amplification—does not initially set high expectations.

The standout characteristic of this amplifier is its neutrality: it does not color the sound but reproduces every detail, for better or worse. It is an honest amplifier that neither hides nor forgives.

While it doesn't astonish with special effects, it remains balanced across the frequency range, delivering an extremely enjoyable listening experience even during extended sessions. It maintains excellent control while being capable of striking with energy when needed: a velvet glove with an iron fist.

Additionally, it easily drives demanding loudspeakers, a feature that is even more evident in this enhanced and upgraded version.

Pietro Di Tomasso