



1. Perreaux Audio owner Edwin Nieman.
2. Head engineer Nick Sargeant (left) and operations manager Juan Calvert.
3. The Perreaux 200iX amplifier.



Sounds good

Dunedin is home to Perreaux Audio, which designs, engineers and manufactures some of the finest audio gear in the world.

STORY SHARON STEPHENSON

Today the audio brand can be found everywhere from South Africa to Bulgaria.

GROWING UP IN Mexico, two things were important to Juan Calvert: music and saving up enough to buy vinyl records. But it wasn't until 2010 that he had what he describes as a life-changing aural experience. "I was working for a client who was building a bespoke amplifier," says the former electronics engineer. "They played one of my favourite Jack White albums using the amplifier and it blew my mind. I'd never experienced such high sound quality that allowed me to really connect with the music. It gave me goosebumps."

It's appropriate that the self-confessed audiophile has landed where he has – as operations manager for Perreaux Audio, a Dunedin-based company that designs and manufactures top-of-the-range, high-performance amplifiers and pre-amplifiers,

speakers and CD players. Started in Napier by Peter Perreux in 1974 to fill the need for a good Kiwi home entertainment system, Perreux Audio is known globally for its ground-breaking design, durability and longevity. "Peter apparently used to test his early prototypes by throwing them off buildings and running them over with a truck," says Calvert, laughing.

Perreux Audio is no one-hit wonder. Over the years it has won a number of accolades, including being named Amplifier of the Year 2023 for its category in Australia's Sound and Vision Awards. The company also relocated to Mosgiel, Dunedin and changed hands twice. Edwin Nieman, who owns local engineering firm Kamahi Electronics, bought it in 2017.

"Having access to the engineering resources of Kamahi Electronics allowed us to modernise the business and take it to the next level," says Calvert, who moved to Otago from Mexico City in 2019. That includes its pre-amplifiers, which handle different sources such as CD players, streamers and vinyl, to deliver a noise-tolerant signal strong enough for further processing or to send to a power amplifier.

"Our range of 100W-750W amplifiers boost the current and voltage of the audio signal to control demanding loudspeakers. Without this control, the final sound could be noisy or distorted." They've also developed a range of loudspeakers and a suite of compact microprocessor-controlled integrated amplifiers that combine both pre-amplifier and amplifier functions. "Our units are designed to be as neutral as possible so they play nicely with any turntable, CD player or streaming device."

The design and assembly process is carried out in Mosgiel using components sourced globally, including transistors from Poland and some circuit boards from Hong Kong (others are supplied by Kamahi Engineering). The unit chassis are built locally and receive their trademark colourful automotive paint jobs from another local supplier. "Customers wanting their hi-fi equipment to fit in with their decor can order bespoke units colour-matched to their sofa or drapes."

Today the Perreux Audio brand can

be found everywhere from South Africa to Bulgaria. Calvert admits most of their customers know their lossless compression from their bit rates. "We're aimed at the premium end of the market, so we're appealing to customers who want well designed amps that deliver the sound experience they're after. Often that's a holographic sound stage, where the speakers 'disappear' into the room so that when you close your eyes and listen you shouldn't be able to accurately identify where the speaker is."

This year the company plans to roll out a new 100W pre-amp, especially designed for people who listen to music on hi-res streaming platforms. "After five years of research, we've launched a range of 100W integrated amplifiers designed for customers who want to improve their home theatre experience. For us, it's all about making beautiful bespoke products that connect with people through the music they love." perreux.com



VANESSA REYNOLDS (INGĀI TAI KI TĀMAKI, TE WAIOHUA), CO-OWNER TŪĀPAE VINEYARD

On the vine

"Our business started in 2021 when we bought the vineyard property on Waiheke Island, my home of 20 years. We released our first wines in December last year, with our cellar door opening in February. My husband and I weren't looking to get into the vineyard and wine business, but had a yearning to live closer to nature on a block of land. The established vines kicked off a new journey in terms of learning about viticulture, but also about mātauranga Māori and my depth of connection to the whenua.

"Our biggest achievement is living on and generating income from whenua in my tribal rohe [area], in an industry that is highly under-represented by Māori. Incorporating ki uta ki tai [from mountains to sea] is integral to how we carry out this work. Our whenua has a stream running through the original ngahere [forest] at the bottom of the property before it makes its way out into Te Marae o Tai. This is my tribal moana, and part of the wider Tikapa Moana [Hauraki Gulf], which is in a biodiversity crisis. There is no way I was going to add to the problems the moana is facing. This has meant having a regenerative focus using only organic inputs, with the ability to become certified organic after three years. My dream is to work with cover crops in viticulture as a sustainable food source. We want to encourage people to consider the interconnectedness of the vineyard, the environment and the native wildlife. The Te Ara Hura track runs through our property with an incredible walk to get here. We want to share more than just wine: the stunning ngahere, the beautiful horizon vistas and the incredible stars at night. Our name Tūāpae means 'anything bounding the horizon'. We selected this name because the views from our ridgeline to the horizon encompass our tribal rohe and gives a sense of what you can achieve if you set your mind to it." tuapae.co.nz