



Rega Elex-R £898



It's been around for a while and looks as unassuming as they come, but the Rega's reputation precedes it

DETAILS

- PRODUCT**
Rega Elex-R
- ORIGIN**
UK
- TYPE**
Integrated amplifier
- WEIGHT**
10.8kg
- DIMENSIONS (WxHxD)**
430 x 80 x 320mm
- FEATURES**
 - Quoted power output: 2x 72W (8ohm)
 - Inputs: 4x RCA
 - MM phono stage
- DISTRIBUTOR**
Rega Research Ltd
- TELEPHONE**
01702 333071
- WEBSITE**
rega.co.uk

A seriously weighty slab of an amplifier, the Elex-R is notably the heaviest of the group. Billed as a hybrid of the smaller Brio-R and the more powerful Elicit-R (HFC 374), what it lacks in aesthetic subtlety – let's be honest here, brutalist is closer to the mark – it more than compensates for in the sheer sturdiness of its casework which, according to Rega, is one of the reasons it sounds the way it does. It's rated at 90W per channel into 6ohm (72W into 8ohm) and there's nothing out of the ordinary about its complement of four line-level inputs or the inclusion of a moving-magnet phono stage and pre-out.

A few performance pointers are suggested by the use of a combined feedback and passive volume control, where the feedback and input levels are varied to set the required volume level. The level and tracking between the two channels is set by the close tolerance parts in the preamplifier circuit and less by the actual potentiometer itself, so keeping the mismatch of channels due to volume control tracking irregularities to a minimum. The method is also claimed to reduce noise and input overload as the control will only 'use' the required gain to amplify the signal. Rega says this form of volume

control is normally only found in professional broadcast environments where accurate low-noise control of levels is demanded.

Sound quality

Working through the amps in the group one-by-one, some peak in particular ways while others make a virtue of their even temperament and all-round facility. The Elex-R doesn't fit into either category for one simple reason: musically, it's untouchable. It may not go the loudest or have the deepest bass or the most expansive soundstage, but its ability to get to the heart of the musical matter seems to have no baggage to slow it down. It's the ultra-fast broadband of musical communication that's, I have to tell you, a real pain because every time it's landed on the equipment rack I just wanted it to stay there when I should really be moving it on for the next amp.

The Nait 5si gets pretty close in its ability to draw attention to what the musicians rather than the recording engineers are doing, but it just misses out on the last few degrees of rhythmic subtlety that makes a piece of music truly immersive and compelling. It's a minute but unmistakable nuance perfectly demonstrated during the second half

A LONG TIME AGO...

Rega's founder and boss Roy Gandy admits to having had a reasonably normal childhood spent building electric guitars, flying model planes, playing the clarinet and breeding budgies. At 14, Roy's mum asked him if he wanted a TV or a record player in the house. Roy begged for a record player. His mum bought a telly! Aged 18, Roy built his first pair of speakers in perfectly sealed cabinets. Not the first Rega product, maybe, but Roy was on his way. His interest in hi-fi evolved from a passion for music – a live concert, a folk club, or any kind of record player. When a flatmate demoed his system consisting of a Garrard SP25 turntable, Sonotone 9TA cartridge, Rogers HG88 amplifier and Wharfedale speakers, Roy realised the record player had room for improvement. The rest, as the saying goes, is history...

of *Turbulence* as the initially sparse sparring between the piano and double bass melts into an altogether more complex and densely layered multi-instrumental arrangement driven by the polyrhythmic patterns of the Nashville Recording Orchestra's drummer. No other model tracks this as well as the Elex-R, and it's a vital ability if you're to stay hooked all the way to the end.

Carlos Santana's extraordinary *Blues For Salvador* needs an amp that's open and resolute, but can really let rip and hit hard and, again, the Rega has the decisive edge and delivers the biggest thrill. It seems to calibrate the best the Cambridge and Naim can do with this track, and nudge it up a hair where it matters. Esperanza Spalding is more startling, Paul Simon more tender – especially on vinyl via the cracking phono input. While the other amps bring special talents to the group, the Elex-R delivers the masterclass ●



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Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

- SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Life, pace, addictive musicality; bomb-proof build
- VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** No style icon
- BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★ **WESAY:** A fabulous, life-enhancing integrated amplifier

FEATURES

★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★