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HI-FI CHOICE
magazine



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ROTEL RA-1062

Still the two-channel benchmark at this level

Back in HFC 244, Rotel's then new RA-1062 integrated amp overwhelmed its counterparts in that month's group test. Not only is it still current but it will remain available through 2004, making it the target for all have-a-go-heroes launched this year. The Rotel formula is simple – use a tried-and-tested, symmetrical power amp circuit with a home-grown power supply that includes its own, in-house-wound mains transformer.

With this as its bare bones, exhaustive listening tests are then undertaken to establish the ideal peripheral components, including reservoir and decoupling capacitors, signal path resistors and op-amps. Just as much work goes into optimising the circuit layout as a minor re-routing can exert a big impact on sound quality.

In practice, the two-tone RA-1062 is an evolution of the RA-1060 and now includes an MM phono stage, balance control and substantial WBT-like speaker connectors. A rotary encoder handles the six input options while conventional analogue controls are provided for record out selection, volume and balance adjustment, A+B speaker selection and Rotel's proprietary 'contour' facility. More flexible than tone controls, this contour option offers two levels of bass enhancement, one level of treble lift and a combination of the two, not unlike a loudness boost.

SOUND QUALITY

Described by our listeners as "punchy, if a little bit forward", the Rotel's very weighty, dynamic and all-round wholesome sound garnered as much enthusiasm as it had under blind conditions some 12 months ago. So, while the RA-1062 made a fine two-channel reference, it was also refreshing to 'validate' our blind listening procedure. If the panel had decided it did not like the amp on this occasion, it wouldn't look good! But the RA-1062 rose further above the pack than it had before, a reflection both of the nature of



its competition this time but also the benefit of having bedded firmly into production.

Now, the reedy rasp of Taylor's harmonica was realised with a deal of bite and realism while the sax really began to 'sing', leaving our listeners eager to hear more. The thump of bass has a decent impact, vocals have real 'presence' and character while percussion sounds crisp, clear and detailed. The choral *Stabat Mater* came in for particular praise, as the soloist was positioned well into the room with a solid, focused image that was busy with characterful detail. The staccato sound of strings also brought life to a performance that had sounded rather flat and relaxed with many of the other amplifiers in the test.

Here is an amp that makes the best of both source and speakers, even the 'audiophile' gear used in our tests. It creates a huge sound vastly out of proportion with its physical stature, a sound succinctly described by our panel as "in the room but not in your face".

Time has not weakened the RA-1062's grip. Much of its competition has striven to achieve a similar standard, but they have fallen back on sound quality. So the RA-1062 is still the two-channel benchmark, offering a generous assortment of features with an unmistakably powerful, purposeful and crisp sound. **HFC**

VERDICT

SOUND >>> 90%

FEATURES >>> 70%

BUILD >>> 85%

VALUE >>> 90%

In every respect, the RA-1062 remains the pick of crop. Fabulous sound quality, useful features and the ability to drive almost any speaker in its path maintains its position as the top two-channel dog.

HI-FI CHOICE 90%
OVERALL SCORE >>>

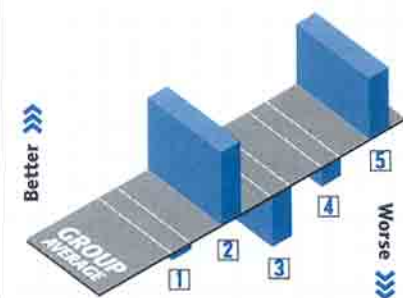


LAB REPORT

Running production changes have seen the RA-1062 improve. The +43.5dB gain and 83dB A-wtd S/N have not changed but the output impedance is now more consistent between left and right channels while the response not only extends out to 100kHz but also lifts slightly to +0.5dB. This is about as 'DVD-A or SACD-ready' as an analogue amplifier can get! Distortion remains higher on the left rather than right channel, increasing from ~0.015% at 1kHz closer to 0.5% and 0.25%, respectively, at 20kHz.

Otherwise, the 2x95W/8ohm output now increases to 2x155W/4ohm and 2x130W, 245W, 400W (14.1A) and a whopping 2x525W (22.9A) are possible into 8, 4, 2 and 1ohm loads, respectively, under dynamic conditions. This makes the RA-1062 the most speaker tolerant amplifier in our test. As before, the L2 contour provides a +6.8dB boost at 20Hz, L1 a +3-4dB lift from 80-20Hz, while H provides a high treble boost amounting to +4.5dB at 35kHz. The LH option is a combination of L2 and H.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Dynamic output >>> -5%
- 2] Speaker tolerance >>> 60%
- 3] Distortion >>> -40%
- 4] Noise >>> -15%
- 5] Compatibility >>> 50%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Continuous power output (8ohm)	60W	95W
Distortion (1kHz/8ohm)	<0.03%	0.015%
Input sensitivity (CD/Aux)	160mV	185mV