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Best stereo amplifier £1500+

Rega Elicit-R £1600

Rega's Elicit-R is the best-value premium integrated amplifier we know. It takes the considerable strengths of the already impressive Elex-R and builds on them strongly, fully justifying the extra outlay.

As with all our Award winners, performance is excellent. The Elicit's most impressive talent is its rhythmic ability. It has an immensely surefooted way with musical timing that can't help but grab the listener's attention.

Complexity with cohesion

Play Kate Bush's *Watching You Without Me* and all the different instruments hit with impeccable precision - it's what keeps the complicated arrangement cohesive and musically interesting.

Keep listening and you'll find the Elicit-R manages to dig up incredible amounts of subtle detail - drums hit with realistic impact and tautness, while it handles Clint Mansell's delicate ambient soundtrack for *Moon* with pleasing cohesion. It's particularly talented with vocals - Kate Bush's voice sounds sensitive and ethereal, making it easy to engage with the music.

The most impressive talent here is rhythmical ability. The Rega Elicit-R has a hugely surefooted way with timing that can't help but grab the listener's attention

Dynamic expression is impressive too. A power output of 105W per channel may be par for the course at this level but the Elicit-R puts its watts to particularly good effect, delivering the huge dynamic swings of the *Inception* OST with real venom.

Some might find the Elicit-R to have a slight leanness to its overall sound, and a hint of brightness to the treble. One or two rivals certainly have a warmer and smoother balance - but provided care is taken with system matching this should never be an issue.

The payback for the slight lack of richness is a very revealing and transparent character. True, it won't hide flaws in recordings or partnering equipment but it will give a very clear insight into whatever you're listening to. If you want to hear everything on a recording we can't think of a rival that does it better.

Add solid build and a neat finish into the equation - along with a comprehensive, well-constructed remote control unit - and you have what we think is a truly top-class amplifier. If you have the budget for this level of amplification, we can't think of a better buy for the money.



Good stage management

Given the Elicit-R's all-round quality, it's no surprise to find that the built-in phono stage is detailed, agile and informative