

Rotel RA-1520



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Rotel RA-1520 Integrated Amplifier

Rotel has been creating audio components for more than 46 years that have all been designed with the goal of bringing high-end audio technology to the more discriminating audiophile. Rotel's RA-1520 integrated amplifier retains the same focus, as this amplifier contains features such as a moving magnet phono input for crystal clear turntable audio and a brushed aluminium front panel that brings professional elegance to its appearance. The old school has met the new school all in one chassis.

The RA-1520 also saves a lot of space for someone who does not want four or five separate components cluttering up their living room or media room. While this amplifier delivers outstanding audio that reproduces musical performances with great acuity, the RA-1520 also does a great job of allowing the user to hook up a variety of digital/analog audio sources to the amplifier using the five inputs included in the rear panel of this audio component.

With that type of adaptability factor built into this well designed integrated amplifier, it's no wonder that the RA-1520 retails for just under \$1,000. But when you consider that this amplifier will dramatically increase the overall audio clarity of your current speaker configuration, the higher price tag is definitely worth it.

Looking at the front panel of this amplifier, you will notice how easily accessible and attractive the front button set-up design is. The panel consists of a very large volume knob surrounded by a light blue undercoating, a smaller power button that lights up around the button when the amplifier is powered up, treble, bass, tone controls all set up close by and source/output controls that can all be accessed with ease.

While listening to various musical groups using a CD player as the primary audio source, I noticed that the RA-1520 was able to replicate instrumental interludes with a natural-sounding smoothness that was truly 'alive' at all times during the song's progression.

A cassette player was then used as the next audio source connected to this integrated amplifier, and again the RA-1520 did an extremely good job of boosting the cassette's audio quality to such a high degree, it was amazing that the music I was listening to was emanating from an analog audio cassette instead of a digital audio source. Most of the vocals I heard during this demonstration sounded vibrant and clear, while the drums, bass and guitar were all replicated with highly detailed tonal structures that really breathed new life into the audio cassette's sound quality.

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No matter what type of musical style used during this demonstration and no matter which audio source used as the main playback component, to experience what the RA-1520 could achieve, the sound stage was always filled with precise audio that exploded with amazing sound clarity. For the serious audiophile who is looking to purchase an integrated amplifier that drastically improves any CD, cassette or phonograph's audio capabilities, the RA-1520 is highly recommended.

High

Points

- This integrated amplifier's ability to increase the sound quality of any audio source component it is hooked up with should be applauded by any fan of stellar audio component design.
- The modern-looking yet classical structure of the RA-1520's front panel will make your friends green with envy when they first gaze upon this beauty.
- With five inputs located in the back panel, this integrated amplifier will allow any consumer full access to their entire musical catalogue, no matter what type of audio format that happens to be.
- The compact design and weight of the RA-1520 (just under eight pounds) means you can easily place this integrated amp in almost any audio rack or shelving space you have in your listening area or media room.

Low

Points

- While this amplifier's ability to reproduce the mid-range and high-end audio frequencies of any audio CD or cassette was done extremely well, I was disappointed with the dispersion quality of the low-end on too many occasions.
- For the consumer who is looking to buy an integrated amplifier that can do a superb job of delivering THX-certified theater surround-sound or DTS sound, he should pass on buying the RA-1520.
- If you happen to own speakers that already possess an outstanding ability to deliver very bright audio, you might want to pass on purchasing this amplifier, as it might bring too much brightness to your overall listening experience. For speakers like Vandersteen or Magenpan many others - this amp is a strong performer.

Conclusion

The Rotel RA-1520 is a sonically dynamic integrated amplifier and the sound quality that this amplifier disperses speaks volumes about Rotel's dedication in designing high-quality audio components year after year. This amplifier breathes new life into audio formats that most critics have long ago left for dead, such as the audio cassette and the phonograph. With its innate ability to process analog audio signals into something resembling the crisper quality of digital signatures, the RA-1520 should be looked at as the wave of the future when it comes to integrated amplifier design technology.

At a price of \$1,000, the average consumer would certainly balk at paying such a high price for most any audio component that does not come with speakers, a CD player, etc. But for the audiophile who is well aware of Rotel's prestigious reputation as one of the premiere audio manufacturers in the world today, the \$1,000 price tag is completely justified.

Review by Rob Mead

<http://hometheaterreview.com/rotel-ra-1520-integrated-amplifier-reviewed/>